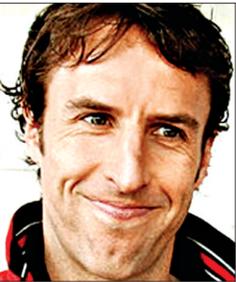




Did U Know?

The world's highest golf course is the Tactu Golf Club in Morococha, Peru, which sits 14,335 feet above sea level at its lowest point.



Gareth Southgate

(Middlesbrough manager)
"Mido is a player I believe possibly has a point to prove. He is a player of great ability, a strong player and a big character -- someone who can lead from the front."
After the Egyptian striker moved to Riverside from Tottenham Hotspur on Thursday.

What to WATCH

ZEE Sports

Nehru Cup Football
Kyrgyzstan v Cambodia
Live from 7:30 pm

ESPN

English Premier League
Man City v Man United
Live from 6:25 pm

Liverpool v Chelsea
Live from 8:55 pm

STAR Sports

English Premier League
Blackburn Rovers v Arsenal
Live from 7:55 pm

Rajib back to winning ways

SPORTS REPORTER

International Master Enamul Hossain Rajib beat FIDE Master Toufighi Homayoon of Iran in the sixth round of the 17th Abu Dhabi Chess Festival yesterday.

With the victory, Rajib has so far mustered four points. He will face Egyptian Grand Master Elishan Moradiabadi today.

GM Amin Bassem of Egypt failed to preserve his top position after Belarussian GM Ashot Anastasian and IM Mahjoob Mortaza joined him on top with 5 points from as many games.

Amin strikes five times

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

Amin scored five goals while Mintu struck a hatrick as Abahani crushed Agradut 8-1 in the First Division Football League in the local stadium yesterday.

Amin netted three in the first half and two more in the second. Mintu scored his hatrick within the first 17 minutes of the match. Agradut's Zakir netted their only goal, two minutes from the final whistle.

Inter-dept football from today

RU CORRESPONDENT

A month long inter-department football tournament of Rajshahi University will begin at the university ground today.

A total of 43 departments will take part in the tournament.

In the opening day, Accounting and Information Management will face Geography and Environment Science.

Two matches will be played everyday at university stadium and Shaheed Habibur Rahman Hall playground, said acting director of Physical Education Mir Sharif Hassan.

Just Academic

Cricket

SPORTS REPORTER

The Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) won many hearts when it signed a benchmark sponsorship deal with Grameenphone for building a National Cricket Academy (NCA).

Five months on, but unfortunately nothing has transpired in this very important task till today in terms of translating the dream into reality.

It was told by the immediate past office bearers of the board after signing a five-year deal with the cellular phone company on March 13 that their first target would be to build a two-storied building for the academy with all the necessary facilities in Mirpur, the home of Bangladesh cricket.

And the consultant agency, Bashat, had mentioned that they would need nine months to build the structure after the completion of the tender processes.

Forget any tender for the last five months the reality is that the board is still delving into an acceptable design.

Fingers however have been pointed towards the highly paid BCB's chief executive officer Mahmudur Rahman for the delay for his failure to coordinate everything for finishing the work as early as possible.

Warne is German?

AFP, London

Australian cricket legend Shane Warne is investigating whether he qualifies for a German passport so he can play county cricket in England as a non-overseas player, it was reported here on Friday.

"My Mum was German. She came over to Australia when she was, I think, four or five," the spinner told the BBC.

"With only one overseas (player) next year, it's something we're looking at."

English county sides are currently allowed to have two overseas players at present, but that will be reduced to one next summer.

Players holding European Union passports do not, however, count towards the quota.

Warne's South African teammate Nic Pothas qualifies through Greek ancestry and New Zealander Hamish Marshall is playing for Gloucestershire on an Irish passport.

If Warne were able to obtain dual nationality, it would enable Hampshire to look elsewhere for someone to fill their overseas vacancy.

"There's been some amazing things happen here in England with people to play as locals, and all that sort of stuff, so it's something we're investigating. We'll just have to find out what happens with that," he added.

Warne, Test cricket's top wicket-taker, will captain Hampshire in the Friends Provident Trophy final against Durham at Lord's on Saturday.

The 37-year-old first played for Hampshire seven years ago and has been with the club since 2004 in his current spell.

He is contracted to the county club until the end of next season, having retired from Test cricket in January with a record of 708 wickets in 145 matches.

Issa to lead in Chennai

UNB, Dhaka

Bangladesh Hockey Federation has named Issa Miah as the skipper of the national team for the 7th Men's Asia Cup Hockey to be held in Chennai in India from August 31 to September 9.

Zahid Hossain will act as the vice-captain of the 18-member national team.

The names of captain and vice captain were approved at a meeting of the Federation held Friday night with its president Air Chief Air Marshall SM Ziaur Rahman in the chair.

Bangladesh have been placed in Pool B of the 11-team Asia Cup along with Korea, India, China, Sri Lanka and Thailand.

The other five teams grouped in Pool A are Pakistan, Japan, Hong Kong, Singapore and hosts Malaysia.

Bangladesh team, expected to leave here on Aug 26, will play their first group match against Thailand on Aug 31, the 2nd against China on

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But like many other issues Rahman portrayed his helplessness.

He defended the delay by saying that they received the revised drawing and estimated budget from the consultant company just a few days back.

"We asked the consultant agency to revise the drawing and costing because we found their initial proposal too high and they gave it to me only ten days back. This is the main reason behind the unfortunate delay and you know during that time the board also went through a transition period," defended Rahman.

Money is however not at all a problem for the board when the sponsor company has agreed to give US dollars 1.5 lakh per year, which means the board would receive US dollar 7.5 lakh (about 5.25 crore Taka) in five years. And the fact is that they will need around Tk 2.5 crore to prepare the house according to the consultant agency.

The new chief of the game development committee Lt Col M Abdul Latif Khan (ret'd), however, was not ready to accept any excuse rather he got surprised by the holdup of a very important project.

"We desperately need the full-fledged academy but the most unfortunate thing is that nobody has taken the initiatives for the last five months to start the work. What I found is that nobody cared about the issue despite the company offering

us handsome money," said an aggrieved Latif.

"Our board president (Chief of General Staff Maj Gen Sina Ibn Jamali) already talked with the NSC president (Army Chief Gen. Moeen U Ahmed) about the leasing of the Mirpur stadium for a certain period of time and hopefully it will be finalised within a short period of time. We will definitely start work for the academy by mid-September," assured the retired army man.

"I read all the papers about the academy and what I found that nobody has taken the initiatives to start the work. There is no scope to make any excuse for this delay. I talked with my president because it's a very important issue for us," he said.

Right at the moment the academy is operating from a rented house and the board are spending near about Tk 5 lakh per month for all the activities.

However the problem is that it can hardly fulfill the demand.

It was learnt that recently the board had to cancel an under-14 camp due to unavailability of a place for the player's accommodation and it's just one example of how desperate the need for a permanent establishment of the academy is.

Dirty Materazzi reveals it

Football

AFP, Rome

Italy's World Cup winning defender Marco Materazzi revealed Saturday that he had told French icon Zinedine Zidane during last year's final that he preferred his "whore of a sister" to his shirt.

It was this comment that led to Zidane headbutting Materazzi in the chest and being dramatically sent off. That incident preceded France losing the final in a penalty shoot-out.

Materazzi, who has previously refused to divulge exactly what he had said to make Zidane react so angrily, made his revelations to Italian magazine "TV Sorrisi e

Canzoni", which is due to be published on Monday.

The uncompromising Inter Milan central defender - who scored in the final and one of the penalties in the shoot-out - had previously made a different statement.

"I held his shirt for only a few seconds, he (Zidane) turned to me and spoke to me in a manic fashion, looked at me arrogantly from top to bottom and said 'if you want my shirt you can have it after the match'."

"I responded with an insult, that is true," said Materazzi.

Zidane - who retired after the World Cup - had previously said that Materazzi's remarks had been personal and concerned his mother and his sister.



File photo dated July 9, 2006 shows France midfielder Zinedine Zidane headbutting Italy defender Marco Materazzi during the final of the World Cup at the Olympic Stadium in Berlin. Materazzi has finally revealed what he had said that provoked such an action from the French legend.

Laxman relishes the challenge

Cricket

AFP, Manchester

India Test batsman VVS Laxman is relishing taking on master spinner Shane Warne in the English County Championship next week.

Laxman, fresh from helping India to a Test series win over England, will make his debut as a Lancashire player against Warne's Hampshire at Old Trafford on Tuesday.

The clash will bring back memories of Laxman's 281 that helped win the Calcutta Test match against Australia in 2001 where India stunned Australia -- Shane Warne included -- with a 171-run victory despite being made to follow on.

"It's always great to come up against a legend like Warne, and I am obviously looking forward to facing him again," Laxman told the Manchester Evening News.

"You just always have to back

yourself to do well against people like that.

"That innings of 281 was a very big influence on my career. To come back and win a game like that gave the whole nation a belief that we were strong.

"Now that has gone, I want to do well for Lancashire. I always look forward to playing against such top class players. There is real satisfaction about playing well against these bowlers."

Laxman also said he will miss Warne, who has retired from international cricket, when India tour Down Under in the winter.

"Luckily I have one more opportunity against him," said the Indian batsman who finished the series against England with 205 runs, two half centuries, and an average of 51.25.



WELCOME ABOARD: Merdeka Cup-bound Bangladesh team captain Hasan Al Mamun (L) fixes the knot of newcomer Jummatul Hossain Mithu's tie prior to their departure for Kuala Lumpur at the Bangladesh Football Federation Bhaban yesterday.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

Syria blank Bangladesh

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh got off on the wrong foot as they suffered a 2-0 defeat against Syria in their opening Nehru Cup match at the Amedbeker Stadium in New Delhi yesterday.

Syria struck both the goal in the second-half after an evenly contested first 45 minutes where Bangladesh looked a slightly better side.

Sporting green and white shirts, the boys of Nayeemuddin did well to keep the top-ranked side of the five-nation invitational tournament at bay in the first-half with tough marking. Moreover they created two half-chances on the break with first effort of left-back Titu missing the far post. Zahid then drove a 25-yard right-footer just over the bar.

Syria, who had earlier won their two previous meetings with Bangladesh, however quickly showed why they have been tipped as the team to beat in the meet. They put an extra attacker down the left side after the break and it gave them instant result.

Captain Maher Al Sayed opened the scoring in the 47th minute with a swerving right-footer that hit the left-hand corner of Biplob's post.

Zayed Chaabou then struck the second with a left-foot grounder from inside the box.

Bangladesh will take on hosts India tomorrow in their next match.

India won the tournament opener against Cambodia 6-0 on Friday.

LOCAL SNIPPETS

SPORTS REPORTER

The National Youth Hockey competition is expected to begin on September 15, it was announced Bangladesh Hockey Federation (BHF) yesterday.

Araf Apparels have agreed to sponsor the youth tournament, informed BHF treasurer Abdur Rashid.

"We planned to start the Youth Hockey from August 25, but decided to defer the date on requests from the participating teams. We expect 15 to 20 teams to take part in this season's competition," he said.

Rashid also informed that Cotton Group would sponsor the Victory Day Hockey Competition, Shaheed Smriti Hockey Competition and Independence Day Hockey.

He also informed that they are planning to launch the Office League from September 5.

Meanwhile, Metro Group will sponsor the School Hockey Competition, which is scheduled to begin on December 15.

The decisions were taken at a meeting of BHF held on Friday with its President Air Marshall SM Ziaur Rahman in chair.

Barring general secretary Shamsul Bari, most of the Federation members were present

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Drizzle ends warm-up

Cricket

CRICINFO, undated

A steady drizzle washed out what promised to be a thrilling run-chase, with the Indians starting positively in pursuit of 297. An overcast day turned damp at around 3:00pm, with the Indians on 32 for no loss after 6.5 overs, and play was called off at 4:15, when the drizzle refused to relent.

On a pitch good for batting, England Lions piled up a challenging 296 for 8 in their 50 overs. Two partnerships, one that kick-started the innings and another that helped them recover from a middle-over slump, guided them to the total. Sourav Ganguly, back at the ground where he spent a season last year, caressed three delectable fours to get the Indians away but the heavens opened up and left the packed house disappointed.

Luke Wright, considered the best young batsman in England, wreaked havoc early but Vikram Solanki, Ravi Bopara and Paul

Nixon carved nuggety knocks that propped up the Lions. Ramesh Powar helped India recover from Wright's initial assault but some handy lower-order contributions, including a late 61-run stand between Paul Schofield and Tim Bresnan, pushed the Lions to an imposing total.

The morning, though, belonged to Wright, an imposing six-footer from Sussex who's had people sit up and take notice. Born in Grantham, the hometown of Margaret Thatcher, Wright made an immediate impact. Walking in at the fall of an early wicket, he spanked Zaheer Khan for a four through square before top-edging another over the wicketkeeper. That, though was just a minor admonition compared to the royal lambasting that Munaf Patel received - peppered for 16 in his first over, including three successive fours.

Solanki, his opening partner, was born a continent away (in Udaipur, Rajasthan) and treated India's bowlers with a bit more respect early on. He was rattled by a Zaheer bouncer in the fifth over, struck flush

on the helmet, but recovered to ease into his stride. He complemented Wright's fireworks with earnest run-gathering, yet brought up his fifty at almost a run a ball. His half-century, off 54 balls, contained just four fours but plenty of quick singles.

Old-timers at this ground wouldn't have been surprised with Powar girth, not after watching Colin 'Olie' Milburn in the '60s and '70s. Roly-poly and flighty, Powar brought India back into the match with a triple blow. He strangled Wright down the leg side, lured Bell to a mis-timed loft to long-on and trapped Owais Shah with quicker one. Hardly had the Lions come to terms with a man who wears sunglasses in overcast conditions than they'd lost three wickets. Piyush Chawla, bounding in from the other end, soon foxed Solanki with a googly. India assumed control of a match that, just a few minutes ago,

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Federer faces Hewitt in semifinals

Tennis

AFP, Cincinnati

Roger Federer won't be overconfident when he faces Lleyton Hewitt in a showcase semi-final Saturday at the Cincinnati Masters, even though he has won his last 10 encounters with the Australian.

"I may have won them, but until last week (Montreal Masters quarterfinals) we hadn't played for two years," said the world number one after overcoming Spaniard Nicolas Almagro 6-3, 3-6, 6-2 on Friday.

"There are plenty of guys who can make it hard for me to win here - and they start with Hewitt."

The unseeded Hewitt defeated Carlos Moya 6-4, 6-2 on Friday to earn revenge for a loss in the final five years ago at this Midwest event.

The 26-year-old Australian holds the Las Vegas title from early March and also reached the semi-finals in Hamburg and Austria.

James Blake will contest the second semi-final after defeating Sam Querrey 5-7, 6-4, 6-4. The ninth seed will take on Russian number five Nikolay Davydenko, who beat Spain's David Ferrer 6-2, 6-4.

Federer, winner of this title in 2005, said he was happy with his game with little more than a week to go before the start of his US Open defence, despite dropping the second set against 32nd-ranked Almagro.

Federer beat Hewitt a week ago in the Monteal quarters on the way into a final which he lost to Serb Novak Djokovic.

While Federer leads Hewitt 12-7 in their career head-to-head, with Hewitt last tasting success in Melbourne Davis Cup play nearly four years ago, the Swiss power-

house said only their most recent encounter was any gauge.

"For me, it's 1-0, since we hadn't played since 2005. It was good to win last week and get an idea of how he plays."

Federer was steady on Friday, breaking four times and firing nine aces in the win over Almagro. He produced 23 winners on the way to victory.

Hewitt knows he's in for a struggle.

gle. "No one has really been able to figure him out so far, he's pretty good. He's obviously a great all-court player," said Hewitt.

"He's got all the shots, and he's got a great head on his shoulders as well. He's one of the best players we've seen in the modern era."



World number one Roger Federer of Switzerland serves to Nicolas Almagro of Spain during their quarterfinal encounter at the Cincinnati Masters on Friday.

PHOTO: AFP