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Did U Know?

Water polo made its debut as an Olympic sport in the London Games in 1900.



Virender Sehwag

(Star Indian batsman)
"It's a new format and my kind of batsmen, who love to leave or defend a ball, would definitely love it. I'm waiting for it as it would allow me to just walk in and start playing my shots without bothering much."
On his Twenty20 World Championship plans.



What to Watch
TEN Sports
US Open Tennis
Day Six
Live from 9:00 pm
ESPN
English Premier League
Liverpool v Derby County
Live from 7:55 pm
STAR Sports
English Premier League
Fulham v Tottenham Hotspur
Live from 7:55 pm
Man United v Sunderland
Live from 10:10 pm

NCA back on track

SPORTS REPORTER

The visiting BCA National Cricket Academy (NCA) returned to winning ways in the tour of Australia when they handed a 77-run defeat to Australian Capital Territory at the Murrumbidgee Oval yesterday.

With the second win, NCA finished third behind New South Wales and Queensland Academy of Sport in the Institute Challenge Cup, which was a league basis seven-team competition.

Nasiruddin Faruque and Jahurul Islam added 69 for the second wicket as the visitors posted 183-9 in their stipulated 40 overs.

Faruque hit 46 of 73 balls with the help of four boundaries while opener Jahurul contributed 41 off 69 deliveries that contained five fours.

Dollar Mahmud however made it possible for his side to put up a decent total on the board as he smote three sixes to make 22-ball 34.

Devoy claimed three wickets.

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Stars to play football tomorrow

SPORTS REPORTER

The exhibition football match between Abahani and Mohammedan and the much-awaited clash between sports personalities and film stars to raise fund for flood victims will be held tomorrow at the Bangabandhu National Stadium after the first two attempts were postponed due to inclement weather and student unrest.

The hour-long Abahani-Mohammedan match will kick off at 4:30 pm, which will be followed by the 'starry' event and a cultural show.

Tickets will be available from 12 noon on matchday at the stadium counters.

Jimmy runs riot

Bangladesh rout Thailand 13-0

Hockey

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh recorded their biggest ever victory in international hockey when they trounced Thailand 13-0 on the opening day of the 7th Asia Cup Hockey in Chennai yesterday.

Four-goal Russel Mahmud Jimmy led the onslaught as the young and experimental side, missing a number of regular faces in the national team, took control at the Radhakrishnan Memorial Stadium in the south Indian city.

Mohammad Mamun hit the mark three times while Zahidul Islam and Iqbal Nader each scored second-half braces for the winners, who led the first half 4-0.

Zahid Bin Talib, Khondokar Hasan and skipper Issa Mia shared the remaining goals.

The victory brought memories of the 1995 SAF Games when Bangladesh thrashed Nepal 12-1 for their previous biggest win at this same ground. The venue also holds memories of Bangladesh's brilliant display against Pakistan with

Mahbub Harun, now coach of the national team, being the fulcrum of the team. Bangladesh eventually went down 3-2 after conceding two goals from penalty strokes in the SAF Games match.

Talib put Bangladesh ahead after four minutes but Jimmy got into the acts in the tenth minute when he doubled the lead. The striker notched his second nine minutes later and the latter strikes from Jimmy, adjudged man-of-the-match, came inside the last three minutes of the match. It is the first time a Bangladeshi player has scored four goals in a match.

"We expected to win the opening match, but never thought the margin would be so big. Our aim now is to play good hockey against big teams," said Bangladesh manager Mohammed Yusuf Ali.

Bangladesh play their next match against China tomorrow.

Agencies add: Malaysia celebrated the anniversary of the country's independence with an emphatic 8-0 victory over Singapore in another match.

"Today is our 50th National Day and we'd like to dedicate this victory to all Malaysians. The win was

very important and I told players to focus on the match," said manager Ponniah Tamilselvan.

Malaysia, who finished fifth in the last edition of the Asia Cup at home in 2003, took time to settle down on a rainy morning and led 3-0 at half time before outplaying the Singaporeans in the second session.

Zulkifli Rejab, Azlon Misron and Chua Boonhuat scored two goals apiece, while Ismail Abu and Megat Azrafiq each struck once.

"It was a slow start, but we adapted better as the match progressed," Ponniah said.

"It was a bit difficult playing the opening match as the ground was slippery. We scored three goals in the last three minutes and it was good to finish on a high note."

Three-time champions Pakistan, Japan, Hong Kong, Malaysia and Singapore are in Group A while Group B comprises two-time winners South Korea, defending champions and hosts India, China, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and Thailand.

The top two teams from each group will advance to the semi-finals.

BCB runs rule over Harmer

Cricket

SPORTS REPORTER

The mission of Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) to appoint the national team's head coach before the tour to New Zealand got underway with the presentation of Australian Academy coach John Harmer yesterday.

The 65-year-old Harmer, who made his first appearance on the board's three-member shortlist of candidates, had a long discussion with BCB's five-member panel at the board's management office in Gulshan.

"His knowledge of the game, error detection, and expertise on bowling impressed us but it is too early to detail the outcome because we have just started the process," said Gazi Ashraf Hossain Lipu, a member of the panel and cricket operations chairman.

He also informed that the Australian agreed to present a training session with the board

contracted players, who are out of the team right now, at the Mirpur Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium today morning.

Former national captain Roquibul Hassan, coach Jalal Ahmed Chowdhury, Ishiaque Ahmed and Lt Col (ret) MA Latif Khan were the other members accompanying Lipu during a four-hour discussion, which the all-smiling Harmer termed as a 'long innings'.

"You know we have two more candidates in our hand now and Zimbabwean David Houghton is likely to make his presentation in September and we can only give you a clear picture after the interview ends. But we must do it before the New Zealand tour in December," said Lipu.

It is believed that Jamie Siddons and Houghton are far ahead in the race and the committee members are only focusing on Harmer's broad knowledge on bowling and on the research of biomechanics. This gave rise to a question of whether the BCB will consider him

in a different capacity if Harmer does not get the main job.

"We are interviewing only for the head coach," responded Lipu with a smile.

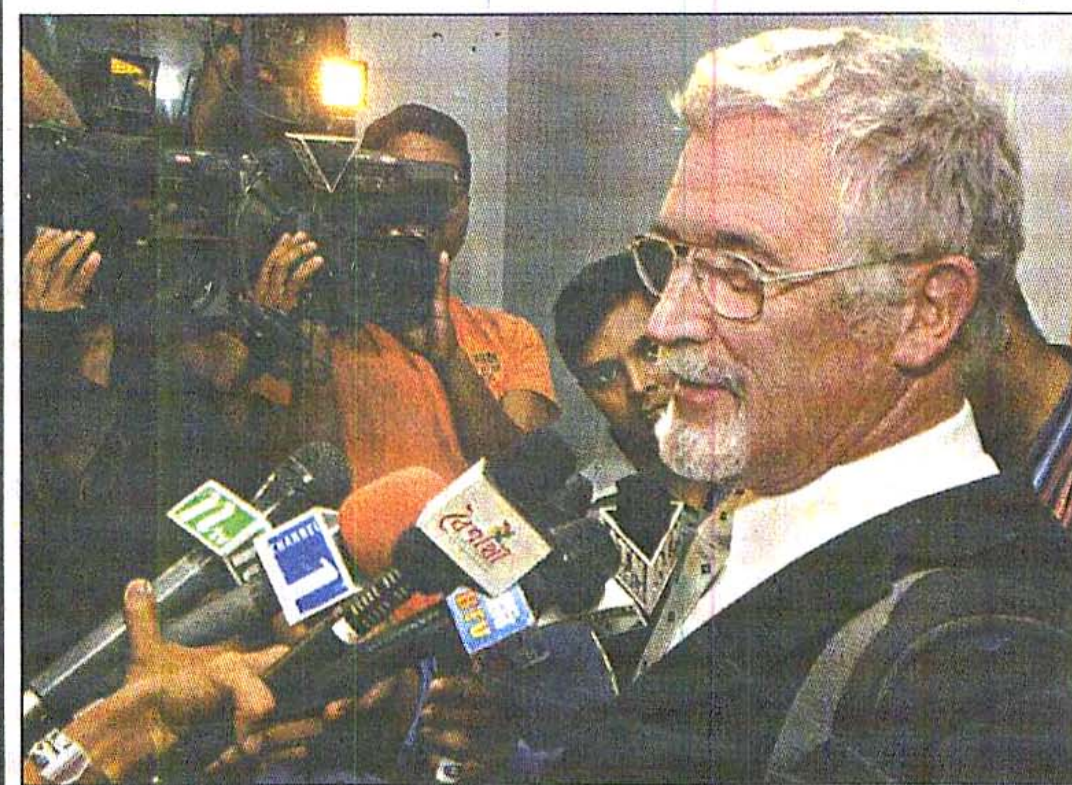
But the man himself was confident enough to do the job. "It was a very good meeting where we had a lot of discussions, long innings (smiles), and just a sort of negotiation," said Harmer in front of members of the press on way to his departure from the interview board.

"I am confident that I can do the job if I get it," he said adding that he was well informed about the madness with the game in Bangladesh.

Harmer also made no mistake to take the opportunity to talk about his target about the team itself.

"I want to make the team a little better than what they are at the moment, if I got the job. Bangladesh is a leading international side, ranked eighth after the World Cup and I will try to make them number seven at first," he promised by informing that he also

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Bangladesh coach hopeful John Harmer speaks to the media after the end of his long presentation at the BCB headquarters yesterday.

Broad stands tall

Cricket

AFP, Manchester

Stuart Broad returned career best figures with both bat and ball as England beat India by three wickets in the fourth one-day international at Old Trafford here Thursday.

When Broad, who'd earlier taken four for 51 as India were dismissed for 212, came to the crease England were in dire straits at 114 for seven. But they still needed fewer than a run-a-ball to win.

And man-of-the-match Broad, 21, helped get them with a composed 45 not out off 73 balls with three boundaries.

Together with Ravi Bopara (43 not out), himself only 22, he put on an unbroken 99 as the two young players battled with the assurance of veterans as they set an England record for the eighth wicket at this level, beating the 76 shared by Paul

Nixon and Liam Plunkett against New Zealand at Perth in January.

"We were in a difficult position. We bowled nicely and kept them to a decent score but I thought Ravi batted superbly and kept me going and it was great to hit the winning runs," Broad said.

Recalled India seamer Ajit Agarkar removed four of England's top six on his way to figures of four for 60 but couldn't inspire his team to victory.

Fast bowler Broad stylishly forced Zaheer Khan off the backfoot for an all-run four and then played a shot worthy of his father, the former England opener Chris who was in the ground, when he drove Khan down the ground for four off the back foot.

Broad, on 25, was fortunate to survive an lbw appeal from teenage leg-spinner Piyush Chawla, with English umpire Ian Gould ruling in his favour.

Bopara played some fine shots

but it was Broad who caught the eye with another superb backfoot drive as he went past his previous best of 29 not out during India's nine-run win at Bristol last Friday.

India captain Rahul Dravid said: "It's very disappointing but you have to give credit to the two boys they played beautifully. We needed a wicket but credit to them, they played well."

England had collapsed to 35 for three, mainly as a result of Agarkar who made up in accuracy what he lacked in pace.

His figures were all the more impressive as his two previous matches this series had left him with a combined return of none for 132 off 19 overs.

Paul Collingwood, the England captain, made 47 before he was run out in a rare fielding triumph for an India side that again leaked runs.

Earlier, Broad's haul surpassed his previous best of three for 20

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Vice-captain Mashrafe Bin Mortaza discusses with interim coach Shaun Williams during their first practice session at the Nairobi Gymkhana ground yesterday.

Shakib misses first game

TIGERCRIKET.COM, Nairobi

Cricket rarely makes the headlines in the Kenyan media unless something out of the ordinary happens and with the world championship of athletics taking place in Osaka the Twenty20 tournament involving Bangladesh, Pakistan, Uganda and the hosts that get underway today is at best a low-key affair. For Bangladesh there is already a problem with key all-rounder Shakib Al Hasan ruled out with a finger injury.

"Shakib has an impact fracture on his right index finger," said team physio Azmal Ahmed. The 20-year-old suffered the injury while playing a Twenty20 match in practice on Thursday.

There are a few posters here and there at the Nairobi Gymkhana with a Mohammad Ashraful hook shot in prominence but there is hardly any fanfare. But the local cricket buffs will be here in numbers today, that's guaranteed.

In the morning they get to see the Pakistanis take on Uganda with the match starting at 9:30 am local time (12:30 pm Bangladesh Standard time) and then the much anticipated battle between the Tigers and Kenya from 2pm (5pm BST).

The Bangladesh side has had a fruitful preparation leading up to this competition which is the start of the warm-ups for the ICC World Twenty20 in South Africa in a couple of weeks time.

"It will be an ideal build-up for the Twenty20 World Championship."

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BFF finds lands for academies

SPORTS REPORTER

The Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) has ensured land for football academies in Barisal and Cox's Bazar.

The academies will be built in the coastal belt with tsunami fund from the FIFA, which arrived long ago.

The progress, however, was all but stopped due to unavailability of land and the BFF was on the verge of returning the 2.5 lakh US dollars to the football's world governing body.

However, Army Chief and National Sports Council (NSC) chairman General Moeen U Ahmed gave his commitment to find land and make sure the fund does not go back.

"We have found the location where the academies will be built on Barisal and Cox's Bazar," informed BFF acting general secretary Manzoor Hossain Malu.

The land in Barisal belongs to the NSC and its secretary Aminul Islam Khan said that arrangements are being made to hand it over to the BFF.

"We have also found four acres of land in Cox's Bazar and the district commissioner has been told to take steps to make it available for a football academy," told Aminul.

The BFF, however, is still in search of a suitable and larger area near Gazipur for another football academy to be constructed under FIFA's Goal Project. The FIFA will allocate four lakh dollars for the second Goal Project to come to the country after financing the BFF's Bhaban earlier.

Rafiq for stronger domestic front

Cricket

MOHAMMAD ISAM, Dhaka

After his appointment as chief selector, Rafiqul Alam underlined his preliminary policies for the first time yesterday.

Speaking to this correspondent, Rafiq said that like any other person going into a new job, he has a mindset with which he will begin work.

Last Tuesday, the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) appointed former national player Rafiq as the chief and former Test captain Naimur Rahman as a selector for two years. They replaced Faruque Ahmed and Athar Ali Khan who were in the job for four years.

Another ex-national captain Akram Khan completes the panel.

"I haven't had talks with my colleagues yet, but I have my own set of goals," said Rafiq while overseeing an under-11 match at the DCA ground in Dhanmondi.

"My personal point of view is that we should have a short-term goal and that should last three to four years if not more."

He stressed on the need of a

coach for the national team who has good batting expertise saying that it could change the face of the side.

"In three to four years time, if we have a coach like that, I can tell you that we will grow in leaps and bounds," pointed Rafiq, one of the first match referees in domestic



RAFIQUL ALAM

cricket.

"In one-day cricket, they should keep an open mind and build on what has been done so far. Over the past few years we have gone ahead in this form of the game," he said.

But Rafiq had more concerns for the Tigers in Test matches where they have stayed at the bottom for the past seven years.

"When it comes to Tests, trying to take the game to the fifth day and getting more draws out of opponents is more important. We have pushed teams like Pakistan (in 2003), done well in West Indies (in 2004) and almost won against Australia here in Fatullah last year. So we can understand that they have it in them to do well in the longer version," said Rafiq, a star of the 1980s and 90s in domestic cricket.

He however indicated that he will be inclined to keep one eye on the domestic front even though the national team are of paramount interest to him.

He said, "I rather think that if domestic cricket is spruced with more money, competition will go up and there will be more close matches. The first-class competition (National Cricket League) should be taken seriously by all concerned and an easy way to get into better shape is to pour money on it."

Rafiq's knowledge of the game, especially of the local circuit, is

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Seeds safely through

AFP, New York



Maria Sharapova produced another display of fearsome big hitting to roll into the US Open third round on Thursday, while top American hopes Andy Roddick and James Blake struggled to stay on course.

The 20-year-old Russian glamour girl opened her shoulders to blast past overmatched Australian Casey Dellacqua 6-1, 6-0 in just 51 minutes.

That makes it just two games lost in two rounds for the defending champion, who next takes on 18-year-old Polish hope Agnieszka Radwanska.

"I did a pretty good job of being solid, but it's only going to get tougher from here on," she said.

"I'm feeling really good and that's the best part of being an athlete - just coming out and being healthy."

On a hot and humid day that saw several players struggling with their fitness, the top half of the men's draw reached the third round stage with all of the big names making it through.

Top seed Roger Federer, aiming to become the first man since Bill Tilden in the 1920s to win the US Open four times in a row, had already made it through by winning his second round tie late on Wednesday.

Joining him on Thursday was the man he defeated in last year's final, Andy Roddick.

The American fifth seed dropped the first set against

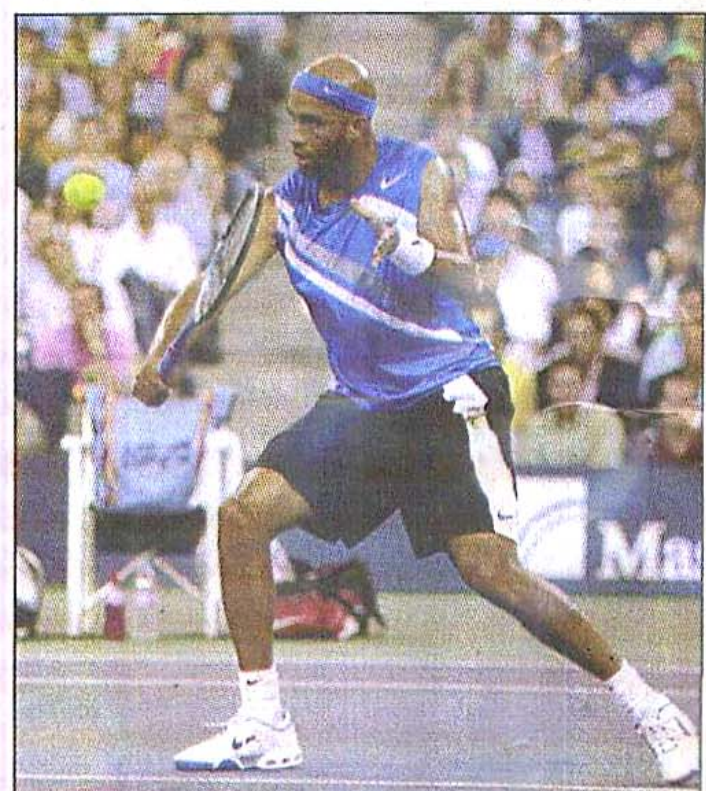
Argentina's Jose Acasuso but won the next two as the South American struggled with a leg injury.

He failed to appear for the fourth set and Roddick moved on to a third round clash against former Australian Open champion Thomas Johansson who outlasted France's Arnaud Clement in a gruelling 6-4, 7-6 (7/4), 6-7 (9/11), 7-7 (7/1) tie.

"Even after the first set I wasn't panicking. I just wanted to see if he could keep it up for an entire five-set match," Roddick said.

"You never like winning matches like that, especially as I think I was starting to play well, but at the end of the day your goal is to go through."

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James Blake of the United States plays a backhand return against Fabrice Santoro of France at the US Open in Flushing Meadows, New York on Thursday.