

Jessore claim kabaddi title

SPORTS REPORTER

Jessore trounced Rajshahi 44-15 to become champions in the Fresh IGP Cup National Youth Kabaddi Championship in the final at the Outer Stadium Kabaddi court yesterday.

Bangladesh Kabaddi Federation president and Inspector General of Bangladesh Police Nur Mohammad was the chief guest at the closing function and distributed the prizes. General Manager of tournament sponsors Abu Zafar was present as special guest.

Earlier, on way to the final, Rajshahi beat Tangail 24-22 in the first semifinal while Jessore eliminated reigning champions Dhaka 45-36 in the other semifinal.

Footballers

FROM PAGE 17
captain Rajani Kanta Barman also will be late, said Malu adding that two senior players -- Matur Munna and Ferooz Mahmud Titu -- did not even report to the BFF.

The footballers only returned this week after playing the Nehru Cup and the Merdeka Cup in India and Malaysia respectively.

Coach Hasanuzzaman Babloo accompanied the team while assistant coach Golam Jilani had left Dhaka a day early to make some arrangements.

Malu also informed that head coach Syed Nayeemuddin will return to Dhaka after a short vacation in India. The former Indian coach and international is expected to land in Dhaka this morning from Kolkata by a GMG flight. He will leave for Chittagong also today.

Meanwhile, goalkeeper and national captain Aminul Haque has refused to join the residential camp unless he is officially called.

The acting general secretary of BFF had asked him to enroll unofficially after coach Nayeemuddin showed his reluctance to include Aminul for missing an entire season through injury.

Ponting

FROM PAGE 17

Ponting said.

"I'm grateful for the support we've both had from Cricket Australia and my teammates, and in particular I'd like to thank (vice-captain) Adam Gilchrist and (coach) Tim Nielsen for their leadership roles in the early days of the Australian squad's first-ever Twenty20 international tour.

"It made things easier here knowing the team was in such good hands."

A decision on whether injured allrounder Shane Watson will join the tour will be announced in South Africa later Friday.

The tournament runs from September 11-24.

He thinks

FROM PAGE 17

Akhtar begged forgiveness from Pakistan's obsessive cricket fans.

"Don't make me a villain. I am a human being and I can also make mistakes. I am sorry for what happened and I hope people will forgive me. I am not a bad human being, it's just that I get angry more often than others," he said.

"I have missed a lot of cricket though injuries and now this has happened. I desperately want to play."

Akhtar also had altercations with former coach Bob Woolmer, including a shouting match during a Test at Port Elizabeth in South Africa in February this year. Then too he was sent home after he ruptured his hamstring.

Woolmer died during Pakistan's first-round exit from the World Cup in the Caribbean in March and was replaced by former Australian fast bowler Geoff Lawson.

Akhtar smacks

FROM PAGE 17

one year, but the bans were overturned.

Akhtar missed the World Cup in the Caribbean due to a knee injury and his comeback was delayed after Pakistan's two one-day matches against Scotland and India were washed out last month.

He has played just four one-day matches and two Tests in the last 19 months.

The Pakistani team has also been mired in controversy.

New coach Lawson is the replacement for Bob Woolmer, the former England batsman found dead in his hotel room in Jamaica after Pakistan crashed out of the World Cup in a first round loss to minnows Ireland earlier this year.

Police initially thought Woolmer had been murdered but later said his death was from natural causes.

In August 2006 Pakistan forfeited the Oval Test match against England, the first time a team had done so in Test history.

The match was declared forfeit by umpires Darrell Hair and Billy Doctrove when the Pakistan players stayed in their dressing room after the tea interval, in protest at a five-run penalty for ball tampering.

Pakistan captain Inzamamul Haq was later cleared of ball tampering but found guilty of disrepute in relation to the post-tea no-show at the Oval. He was banned for four one-day matches.



National footballers take seat in the team bus at the BFF Bhaban yesterday morning before they set off for Cox's Bazar for the month-long training camp.

Entertain while winning

CRICINFO, undated



Australian fast bowler Brett Lee could hardly hide his excitement about being back in action when he called Twenty20 "three hours of the most amazing cricket". He will be spearheading Australia's attack in the ICC World Twenty20 after a seven-month layoff from the game.

The quartet of players Australia trooped out in front of the media in Johannesburg on Thursday -- Michael Clarke, Michael Hussey, Andrew Symonds and Lee -- all indicated it was important to remember the 20-over game was all about entertaining the crowd.

"We need to make sure we adapt to this new tournament as quickly as possible but the most important thing is this event is attracting a different demographic to cricket," Lee said. "Bearing in mind that Australia haven't come here to finish second, third or fourth, Twenty20 is all about having fun with the crowd. It's three hours of the most amazing cricket with plenty of sixes."

Lee missed Australia's victorious World Cup campaign in the Caribbean after injuring his ankle ligaments during a training session in February and the ICC World Twenty20 provided the perfect opportunity for him to re-establish

himself as a star on the global cricket stage.

"This tournament is a massive consolation for missing the World Cup, it's a real opportunity for me," Lee said. "I've been able to use the time off to concentrate purely on pre-season fitness and it was a good opportunity to give my body a bit of a rest from bowling. So I'm really happy with my fitness and the way I've been bowling. I'm championing the bit."

Lee said it was also important to embrace the differences that Twenty20 has brought to the game. "Things like sitting on the boundary and not in the change rooms, teams having to swap change rooms straight after a match -- we should embrace it as new and accept that things are done differently in Twenty20. The spectators like it and it brings us closer to them."

Lee indicated that he would not be looking to cut down on speed or bowl defensively in the tournament. "The aim is still to get ten wickets, no matter what form of the game," he said. "If you can get wickets early on, it's definitely going to dent the opposition's run-scoring."

"You need to keep the boundary-scoring down too, but you need a couple of guys who are around 150 kph, using their pace and getting the ball up in the spot. If the batsmen are going for big shots, it does mean you have a better chance of taking a

wicket and it doesn't matter if it comes by knocking (down) the stumps or if it's caught on the boundary."

Australia are once again overflowing with batting power as they enter the inaugural ICC World Twenty20 as favourites, but Hussey, who had a disappointing World Cup with little opportunity to shine, said he was just chuffed to be part of a winning team.

"I actually thoroughly enjoyed the West Indies, it was just a pleasure to be with the team and see how well the top four batted and how well the bowlers executed our plans," Hussey said. "I probably won't get a lot of opportunity in this tournament either, but I'm really keen to play and get into a match situation again. I'm sick and tired of all the training."

Hussey said that Australia would have to rely on their natural instincts because they did not have much experience of Twenty20 cricket. "You can put a couple of tactical things in place, but it's best to just let your instincts take over and trust your skills," he said.

"We haven't played much of this format of cricket, so we'll need to get our skills up. But we are all very experienced cricketers who know our games very well and we don't rely on one or two key players -- we have match-winners all the way through the squad."

5-star Yusuf guides Sena Pally School

SPORTS REPORTER

After their seniors got off to a bright start in the first round on Thursday, the Sena Pally High School Under-11s recorded a massive 7-0 win over Motijheel Ideal School in the junior section of the Dhaka School Football League yesterday.

Yusuf Kabir was the star of the victory slamming five goals at the Segun Bagicha School ground while Alim scored twice for the winners.

In other U-11 league matches of the day, Khilgaon Model High School edged Motijheel Government High School 1-0 while Motijheel Government Primary School drew goalless with Al Ahmed High School.

In the U-13 league, Segun Bagicha HS beat Haider Ali HS 1-0, Shaheed Nabi HS defeated Kamalapur School by same margin and Khilgaon HS crushed Jatrabari Ideal HS 3-1.

In Thursday's U-11 league, Sakibul Hasan slotted four goals to help Motijheel Government trounce Nidhu Babu Smriti Government Primary School 7-0, Haider Ali HS beat Segun Bagicha 2-1 and Jatrabari Ideal shared points with Khilgaon HS in a 1-1 draw.

In the U-13 competition, Sena Pally dumped Motijheel Ideal 5-0 while Dharmarajik HS blanked Ali Ahmed School 3-0.

Manikchhari reach final

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Khagrachhari

Towhid struck twice as Manikchhari reached the final of the second Deputy Commissioner Gold Cup tournament beating Ramghar 3-1 in the semifinal at the Khagrachhari Stadium yesterday.

The striker scored in the 18th minute before making it 2-0, 10 minutes later. Midfielder Imtiaz scored one more for Manikchhari in the 43rd minute to finish off the game.

Ramghor striker Sujon scored a consolation goal two minutes from full time. Ishaq of Ramghor and Pulok of Manikchhari were given a red card each.

Manikchhari will now face Dighinala on September 9.

Coach search

FROM PAGE 17

If the board ultimately fails to find out a new coach for the tough tour to New Zealand, then there is a big problem. If they continue with the interim coach Shaun Williams, cricket development activities will be severely hampered.

Williams, the national game development manager, has been acting as a stop-gap option since the last Sri Lanka tour but the present board is seriously concerned about his absence in the development programme.

And in that case, BCB has to rely on a makeshift arrangement with the local like what the Indian authorities have done but Lipu said they still have sometime to think about the new man.

The new cricket operations committee boss however was excited by the fact that the national players are going to get enough match practice before the trip as it is all set to start the season with the national cricket league from first week of next month.

"It's always better to play matches. I am hopeful that this season's first-class competition will be more competitive which can make an impact on our performance in the very tough tour in New Zealand," he said.

Hosts seek recovery

AFP, Johannesburg



On the last occasion South Africa hosted a

world cricket event the host country

crashed out ignominiously.

Home team captain Graeme Smith will be hoping history doesn't repeat itself in the inaugural ICC Twenty20 World Championship starting at the Wanderers Stadium next Tuesday.

By coincidence, South Africa's tournament-opening match is against the West Indies, the side that first derailed the Proteas' campaign by winning the first game of the 2003 World Cup at Newlands in Cape Town.

It was because of South Africa's failure to advance beyond the group stage in 2003 that Shaun Pollock was fired as captain and Smith took over at the age of 22.

Apart from Smith's aggressive leadership, he will have a key role as a hard-hitting left-handed opening batsman.

He is the highest scorer in the short history of 20-overs internationals, with 259 runs hammered off only 188 balls at an average of 86.33. He has hit three half-centuries in five matches, more than anyone else in the world.

South Africa, though, have won only two of their five matches, even though four of the games have been played at the Wanderers, South Africa's largest stadium.

South Africa's other group opponents are Bangladesh, who gained an upset win over the Proteas in the 50-overs World Cup in the West Indies earlier this year.

Smith has warned that although Twenty20 is traditionally a batsmen's game, conditions could be tricky.

"I'm unsure whether batsmen are going to totally dominate. No one really knows what conditions are going to be like at this time of year," he said.

September is early for big cricket to be played in South Africa and despite intensive efforts, particularly at Newlands where there has been heavy winter rain, pitches may give seam bowlers some help.

South Africa go into the tournament without star all-rounder Jacques Kallis, who was controversially left out of what is generally a young side.

Wicketkeeper Mark Boucher was fined 60 percent of his tournament match fees for criticising his friend Kallis' omission.

There was also controversy about the racial make-up of the

side.

It's understood that the side originally chosen included only five black players but officials insisted that a minimum of seven be picked -- the same number as were in the squad for the World Cup in the West Indies.

A likely casualty of the "quota" was reliable all-rounder Andrew Hall, who last week notified Cricket South Africa that he was quitting international cricket.

Despite the upheavals, South Africa should have a competitive side although the withdrawal through injury of big-hitting Loots Bosman could spike their guns.

Other quick scorers include Herschelle Gibbs, Justin Kemp, Shaun Pollock, Boucher and left-hander Albie Morkel, an all-rounder picked ahead of Kallis.

As preparation for the Twenty20, South Africa sent most of the squad to Zimbabwe for three 50-over internationals last month.

The batsmen shone but the bowling was disappointing, with South Africa only managing to bowl out their lowly opponents once in the three matches.

Veterans Pollock and Makhaya Ntini will seek to improve on recent form but Mome Morkel, younger brother of Albie, is a young fast bowler with wicket-taking ability.

Vincent excited at new era

CRICINFO, undated



Lou Vincent, the New Zealand batsman, is in

confident mood ahead of the ICC

World Twenty20 though insists that,

aged 28, now is the time for him to

perform on a consistent basis.

"It's been my downfall before that I throw my bat a bit early on and make a monkey of myself," he said in Johannesburg on Wednesday, "but in Twenty20 cricket, as an opener, the game is ideally set up for me. The new ball goes further and if I can set the run-rate going at a good rate and lay the platform for a big score then I'll be satisfied.

"If you look in the dictionary under Twenty20, it will probably say 'a short game. You watch for three hours, you don't fall asleep and you don't ever leave your chairs. Three hours of wham! bam! That's probably the longest

definition ever in a dictionary and in Latin it probably just says 'good times'.

"But Twenty20 is fast and I'd like to see this tournament played every year."

Vincent is one of New Zealand's more agile players, and he insists that fielding will have a vital role to play in the ICC World Twenty next week.

"Fielding will make a massive difference, especially in a place like Durban," he said. "It's a bigger ground and the ball doesn't travel so far down there on the coast, so it calls for a lot of twos when you are batting. The fielding side has to make sure they have their quicker guys on the boundary to attack the ball. The 10 or 15 runs they can save can be crucial at the end."

Vincent, who made an outstanding start to his international career in 2001, has since struggled to cement his place. Aged 28, he concedes that it's now or

never for him.

"Early on, it's an exciting time in your career and as you progress you have to adapt and learn as you go through all the ups and downs," he said. "But then you come to the business end of your career when you've learnt the game and you need to keep improving. So I'm definitely taking this tournament very seriously, because I know that if I don't perform I won't be in the team.

"It's an exciting new era for us, we will miss Stephen Fleming, he obviously played a massive part in this team, but Daniel Vettori is taking over at an appropriate time, he's been playing international cricket for the last nine or 10 years.

"We're all around 28 or 29 years old and it's time for us, we're all coming to the business end of our careers."



An action from the Dhaka School Football League (Under-11) match between Sena Pally High School and Motijheel Ideal School at the Segun Bagicha School ground yesterday.

Djokovic jokes into semis

FROM PAGE 17

succeed in tennis, he has a career in that."

Said Djokovic: "I'm really happy that the people accept it in a positive way. I'm not trying to make fun of Maria or Rafa or anybody else."

There's only one person he can't imitate.

"The untouchable one -- Roger," he said. "He's too perfect for my style."

At this rate, he might soon get to see Mr. Federer.

On Saturday, Djokovic will play No. 15 David Ferrer, who made it to his first major semifinal by beating No. 20 Juan Ignacio Chela 6-2, 6-3, 7-5.

The top-ranked Federer is in his record 14th Grand Slam semifinal in a row and plays No. 4 Nikolay Davydenko on Saturday. Federer is 9-0 against Davydenko, and does almost as well against the other two men left -- 7-0 against Ferrer, 4-1 against Djokovic. On the women's side, Venus Williams will play Justine Henin in Friday's marquee matchup.

After beating Serena Williams in her previous match, Henin will try to become only the second woman to beat both sisters at the same Grand Slam tournament. Martina Hingis did it at the 2001 Australian Open.

"It will be a good challenge for me to play both sisters in the same

tournament," Henin said.

In the other women's semi, 2004 U.S. Open champion Svetlana Kuznetsova will play No. 6 Anna Chakvetadze.

Djokovic has a lot of skills, including a talent for bouncing the ball before he serves.

He did it 28 times before he served at a key spot in the tie-breaker. Djokovic put that serve into the net, but eventually won the set.

Moya said he wasn't bothered by Djokovic's routine. What troubled Moya was that Djokovic kept putting those balls in play.

"It's annoying because you know a huge serve is coming," he said. "If he does that and misses, that's OK."

Djokovic dropped the bounces into single digits by the third set, when he overwhelmed the Spaniard.

"This is just a matter of concentration. I'm trying to really focus and not irritate anybody. Sorry if I'm a bit annoying," Djokovic said. "The thing is, I want to stay longer on this court, so that's why I'm bouncing more and more."

Last month, Djokovic beat Federer for the first time. That happened in the final of a hard-court tournament in Montreal when Djokovic became the first man since 1994 to defeat men ranked

Nos. 1-3 at the same event.

A night after Federer and Andy Roddick thrilled the crowd, it was far from a high-voltage afternoon at Arthur Ashe Stadium.

There was a constant murmur inside -- many fans were chattering during play, and no one bothered to hush them. A few cell phones went off, usually a clear no-no met with stern looks.

Midway through the Ferrer-Chela match, the concession stands that sell \$6 Coney Island hot dogs were empty. So were the counters where they line up Grey Goose vodka bottles for \$8 mixed drinks.

Hardly anyone stepped into the Ralph Lauren walk-in boutique store on the suite level, either.

The 20th-ranked Chela had won the previous meetings against Ferrer, both in 2004. Like Ferrer, the Argentine was trying to make it to his first Slam semi.

Coming off a pair of five-set matches, Chela tried to rally in the second set. The eighth game went to seven deuces before Chela won, then Ferrer came back and quickly closed it out.

Chela broke Ferrer for a 2-0 lead in the final set but couldn't hold on.

"That was my only real chance," Chela said.