

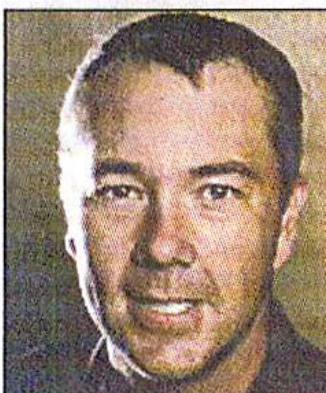
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Did U Know?

New Zealander Jeff Wilson, who played four ODIs as a 19-year-old allrounder of considerable promise, turned his attention to rugby where he became an All Black legend with 44 tries in 60 appearances.



Craig McMillan
(Former New Zealand batsman)
"I feel that the past season has been one of the best of my cricket career and I am happy to be retiring on a really positive note."
While announcing his retirement from international cricket.

What to WATCH
ESPN
Sportscenter India
Sports News
Live at 8.30pm

DAY'S EVENT
National Cricket League 2007-08
Day One
Dhaka v Khulna
Venue: Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium, Dhaka
Barisal v Chittagong
Venue: Shaheed Chandu Stadium, Bogra
Rajshahi v Sylhet
Venue: Rajshahi Divisional Stadium

Tennis meet from Oct 23

UNB, Dhaka

The Acme Baby Zinc Tennis competition, jointly organised by Bangladesh Table Tennis Federation and Jafar Imam Tennis Complex, will begin on in Rajshahi on October 23.

Six events -- men's singles, men's doubles, boys' singles (16 yrs & below), girls' singles (16 yrs & below), boys' singles (14 yrs & below) and mini tennis group -- will be held during the five-day competition.

Entry fee of Tk 50 for junior events and Tk 100 for senior events will have to be submitted to the match referee on October 20 at the Ramna National Tennis Complex in Dhaka and October 21 at Jafar Imam Tennis Complex at Rajshahi.

Kabaddi, Billiard for Asian indoors

UNB, Dhaka

Bangladesh will only take part in kabaddi and billiard in the second Asian Indoor Games being held in Macao from October 26.

The kabaddi team comprises of 12 players and two officials while the billiard team of two players and one official.

Billiard team will leave for Macao on October 25 while the Kabaddi team will be off, two days later.

Bangladesh Olympic Association (BOA) acting secretary general Kutubuddin Ahmed will meet the teams before their departure on October 22.

Rain threatens NCL start

MOHAMMAD ISAM



Non-stop rainfall throughout yesterday put a serious doubt on the scheduled start of the 9th National Cricket League across the country today.

In the first round of the first-class competition, Dhaka host Khulna at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium, Rajshahi play Sylhet at the Rajshahi Divisional Stadium while Barisal take on Chittagong at the Shaheed Chandu Stadium in Bogra in four-day matches.

Weather conditions in all three venues have worsened over the last few days and as a result, there is little chance for any action on the first day.

The main fanfare will take place in Dhaka where Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) will officially launch the tournament but only the brief opening ceremony looks to be a certainty as the ground, considered the best in the country,

is wet and had its pitches covered on the eve of the opening day.

Match umpires Nadir Shah and Shawkatul Rahman, who spent all afternoon at the Mirpur venue, were optimistic of some play today even though the conditions looked bleak.

"The ground has good drainage and is actually set on sand. Some sunshine and no rain from tonight (Thursday), could give us a scheduled start," said Shah.

"It will take 45 minutes for the entire 150 yards to dry up because of the quality of the ground. And with the pitch covered, there won't be a problem if the weather improves."

The match will see the current national captain Mohammad Ashraful leading defending champions Dhaka against his predecessor Habibul Bashar, who has a formidable Khulna side at his disposal.

Ashraful, who made a glorious 263 against Chittagong last season, has the upper hand in terms of first-class experience ahead of Bashar, who did not play a single

NCL match last year.

Away at Rajshahi, the home side took part in light practice late in the afternoon and captain Khaled Mashud, who is expected to bat at number six, informed that the pitch was slightly damp.

"It looked good but with so much rain and very little sunshine, the wicket was slightly cold. Actually it was well-covered all day because of the inclement weather," said Mashud, who will lead the newly men of last season, against a revamped Sylhet outfit, led by batsman Rajin Saleh.

He also mentioned that a final eleven was not selected because of weather issues and they would like to see how the pitch would turn up in the morning or before play starts.

Sylhet did not impress last season and have a golden opportunity to stun Rajshahi but it will be a huge ask for a side that have regularly looked to draw these four-day matches.

Barisal, which do not have a home venue in their division, have been allotted Bogra as their home

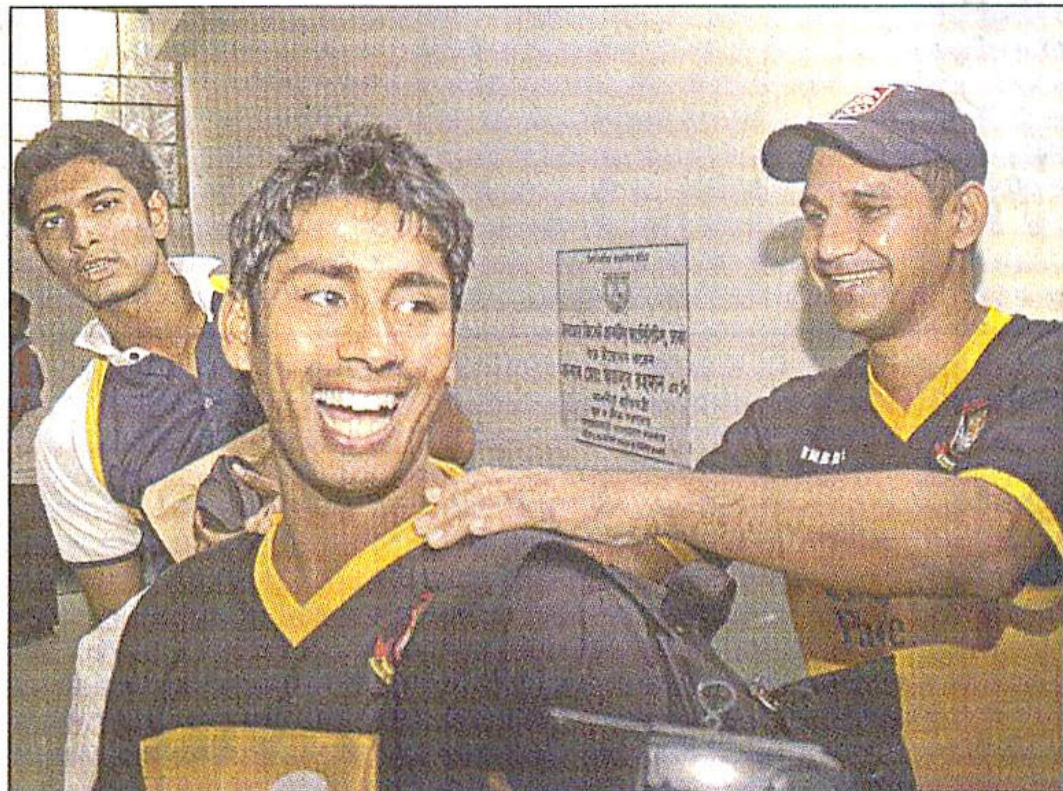
ground for their first round match against high-fliers Chittagong.

The northern town is nothing different than its neighbouring Rajshahi as rain has forced the 'home' side to practice indoors. Barisal, forever the basement side in first-class cricket, have a better side and are looking to make their way up on the table in this ninth edition.

Barisal players did their work indoors near the ground but were lucky enough to have fielding drills, although on a wet outfield.

Newly appointed manager Aminul Haq said that players enjoyed the session and were in good spirits and there were no injuries.

Their opponents Chittagong only arrived on Thursday afternoon and had little time to look at the conditions. The visitors, led by Ehsanul Haque, will look at international stars Aftab Ahmed and Tamim Iqbal to provide impetus although some say that the port city's main strength lies in the captain's bat and the off-spin of Sabbir Khan.



Khulna captain Habibul Bashar (R) jokes with his Dhaka counterpart Mohammad Ashraful after practice at the indoor facilities of the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday.

SA ride on twin tons

Cricket

AFP, Lahore

AB de Villiers and Herschelle Gibbs smashed centuries to help South Africa beat Pakistan by 45 runs in the first day-night international at the Gaddafi Stadium here on Thursday.

De Villiers notched a brisk unbeaten 95-ball 103, while Gibbs scored 102 to propel the tourists to 294-5 in 50 overs before paceman Makhaya Ntini restricted Pakistan to 249 in 46.3 overs.

The victory gives South Africa a 1-0 lead in the five-match series. The second match will be played here on Saturday.

Mohammad Yousuf top-scored for Pakistan with 53 and Shahid Afridi hit a rapid 26-ball 47 with five boundaries and two sixes. But it was not enough after Ntini grabbed 4-69 to derail the run chase.

The 30-year-old paceman destroyed the top order in a fiery burst, removing Imran Nazir (16), Younis Khan (12) and Mohammad Hafeez (six) to reduce the home team to 37-3.

Ntini had Nazir caught at short cover in his second over, then forced an edge off Younis in the third before accounting for Hafeez, caught hooking, in his fourth.

Younis hit two boundaries to complete 4,000 runs in limited

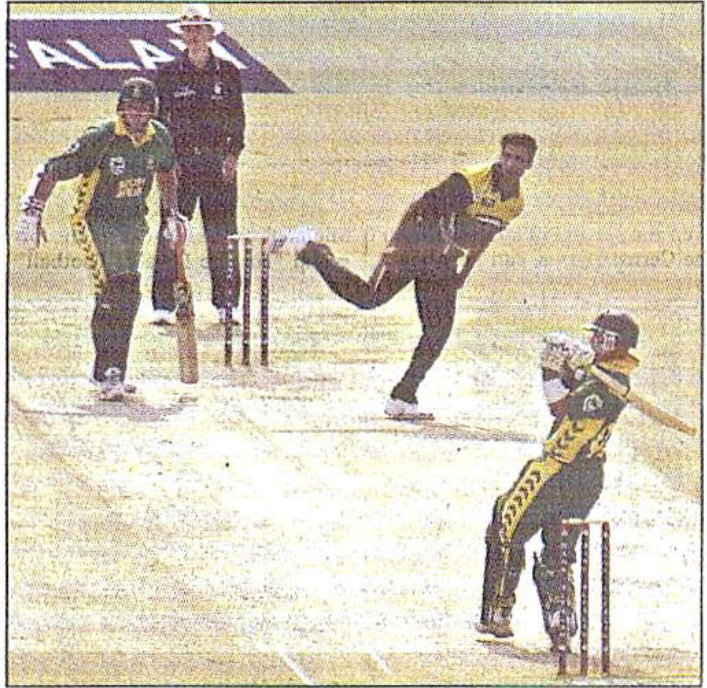
overs cricket. Shoaib Malik hit Ntini for three boundaries in his fifth over before the paceman struck back, dismissing the Pakistan captain off a mis-cued flick for 18.

Yousuf and Misbah-ul Haq (20)

then added 37 for the fifth wicket before Chari Langeveldt removed Haq to leave Pakistan struggling at 92-5.

Yousuf found an able ally in Kamran Akmal (35) as they added

SEE PAGE 17 COL 2



South African opener Herschelle Gibbs pulls through midwicket on way to his 102 in the first one-day international against Pakistan at the Gaddafi Stadium in Lahore on Thursday.

BCCI alert for racism

AGENCIES, undated

The Board of Control for Cricket in India has said that it will take measures to prevent bad crowd behaviour during the Twenty20 international between India and Australia at the Brabourne Stadium on Saturday.

"The BCCI has appointed chief administrative officer Professor Ratnakar Shetty to deal with the crowd-control issue and it will be done in consultation with the Mumbai police," BCCI vice-president Lalit Modi was quoted as saying in PTI. "We can only persuade the crowd to control themselves but cannot make any arrests. All we can do is to eject people from the ground."

Another BCCI vice-president Rajeev Shukla said that police personnel would be posted in various enclosures to prevent poor behaviour.

These measures follow the issue of Andrew Symonds being subjected to racial abuse once again during the seventh ODI at the Wankhede Stadium in Mumbai. An Australian photographer captured on camera certain spectators in the North Stand enacting monkey chants, a complaint that had been first made during the fifth one-day at Vadodra last week.

BBC adds: Four Indian cricket fans have been charged for allegedly racially abusing Australian cricketer Andrew Symonds by making monkey gestures, police say.

The four fans were evicted from a one-day international match in Mumbai (Bombay) on Wednesday. Symonds is the only mixed race player in the Australian side, having made his international debut in 1998.

Cricket officials say that photographs of fans making offensive gestures to Symonds as he came in to bat have been handed over to police.

Police say that the four fans, including a woman, have been charged with harassment and have now been released on bail to appear in court at a later date.

The BBC's Sanjoy Majumder in Delhi says that the gestures were made even as an anti-racism message flashed on a big screen.

ARGENTINA TOP GROUP Five star Brazil

INTERNET, undated



Kaka scored two goals to help Brazil beat Ecuador 5-0 on Wednesday night in a qualifying game for the 2010 World Cup in South Africa.

Vagner Love, Ronaldinho and Elano also scored for Brazil, which opened qualifying Sunday with a 0-0 tie away at Colombia.

Ecuador lost their home opener against Venezuela last week.

Colombia played out their second goalless draw in three days, away to Bolivia, and Chile and Paraguay won at home to kick-start their campaigns in Wednesday's other South American games.

Chile beat neighbours Peru 2-0 in Santiago and Paraguay battled to a 1-0 win over Uruguay in Asuncion.

Argentina, 2-0 winners in Venezuela on Tuesday, were left as

the only side with a maximum six points from two games in the single South American group.

Brazil and Paraguay have four each, followed by Uruguay, Chile and Venezuela on three, Colombia on two, Peru and Bolivia one and Ecuador on none.

Playing their first home game for two years and first at the hallowed Maracana for seven, Brazil made heavy work of Ecuador for the first 70 minutes when only Vagner Love's 19th minute goal separated the sides.

With Ecuador looking increasingly capable of snatching an equaliser and the 70,000 crowd growing impatient, the game suddenly lurched in Brazil's direction.

The goal glut began with a fortuitous effort in the 73rd minute when Ronaldinho appeared to turn Kaka's apparently innocuous long-range effort into the goal.

That was followed by two moments for brilliance, the first from Kaka, who pounced on a half

clearance and scored with a curling 30-metre shot into the top right-hand corner.

The second was Robinho's disconcerting dribble which sent him clear of Ulises de la Cruz to set up the fourth for substitute Elano.

Two minutes later came the farce as Kaka's apparently harmless 25-metre effort somehow slipped under Ecuador goalkeeper Daniel Viteri and into the net.

"I didn't see the goal because I shot very weakly and I turned my back," Kaka told Brazilian television.

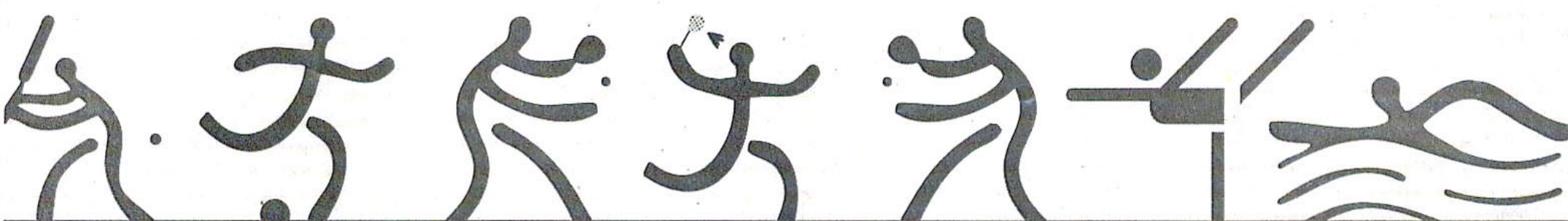
The game was a far cry from events in La Paz where Bolivia and Colombia played out a goalless stalemate at 12,600 metres above sea level, leaving both teams without a goal or win in the group.

Bolivia had midfielder Leonel Reyes sent off in the 66th minute.

Chile, beaten 2-0 by Argentina on Saturday, sank Peru with goals early in each half from Humberto Suazo and Matias Fernandez.



Brazil star Kaka (L) shoots the ball past an Ecuador player during their World Cup 2010 qualifying match at the Maracana on Wednesday.



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