

Akhtar sent to hospital

CRICINFO, undated

Shoaib Akhtar, the Pakistan fast bowler, was taken to hospital for an MRI scan after suffering back pain during the first day of the final Test against India in Bangalore. The scan revealed no injury but he has been experiencing muscle spasms and will not take further part in the first day. He will be assessed on Sunday morning.

Shoaib bowled four overs in his first spell before going off the field at the end of the seventh over, during which he showed discomfort while bowling. He came back on after Gautam Gambhir was dismissed in the eighth over but once again left the field after bowling the ninth. He bowled eight overs in the first session and managed two more after the break before once again leaving the field at the end of the 32nd over.

Akhtar, 32, took six wickets in Delhi and two in Kolkata, where he played with a chest infection.

BFF president

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"It's not right the way they are communication with FIFA, which is very much one-way, about formation of the DFAs (district and divisional football associations). They must have misled FIFA to have things their way," Tapan had added.

The BFF has ignored all popular demands to discuss with its councillors about formation of the DFAs and remained autocratic about all election decisions.

Sultan told a number of TV channels that the sports adviser had no jurisdiction to talk about the BFF as it was under the wings of FIFA and AFC.

"I do not want to go against him (Tapan) but he does not have a clear idea about these things. It is out of his area. We (BFF) have called an emergency meeting on Monday to decide how to protest this," Sultan added.

He knows

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a mark in Tests.

"I always knew I could do well in Test cricket because you always have time to settle down. If you take out that time you can still bat well. For me Test cricket is always the main thing. So I'm very happy with my effort today," he told reporters.

Yuvraj, who has been in awesome form this season, blamed himself for being unable to gain a foothold in Test cricket and said he has not capitalised on the opportunities that came his way.

BVF honours

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Championships in Kolkata earlier this year.

Special guest Latifur Rahman, chairman and managing director of Transcom, said that his organisation, like elsewhere in the world, has been sponsoring sport in Bangladesh and will continue this process.

He also promised to sponsor Bangladesh's Everest Expedition team that have targeted scaling the world's highest peak in 2009.

AKM Zakaria, ex-BVF president Lt Gen (retd) Mahbubur Rahman, Bangladesh Olympic Association's acting secretary general Kutubuddin Ahmed and BVF president Golam Quddus Chowdhury also spoke on the occasion.

Frings pencils

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Germany have been drawn in the same group as hosts Austria, Croatia and Poland for next summer's European Championships.

But Loew will need to have the currently injured midfield trio of Frings, captain Michael Ballack and Bernd Schneider back for next June's tournament if Germany are to progress to the final.

"If we want to win, we need our most experienced players. Against many of Europe's strongest teams there is only a small margin for error without our best players," warned Frings.

"But we'd have no chance against the likes of France or Italy without our best team."

Boca ready

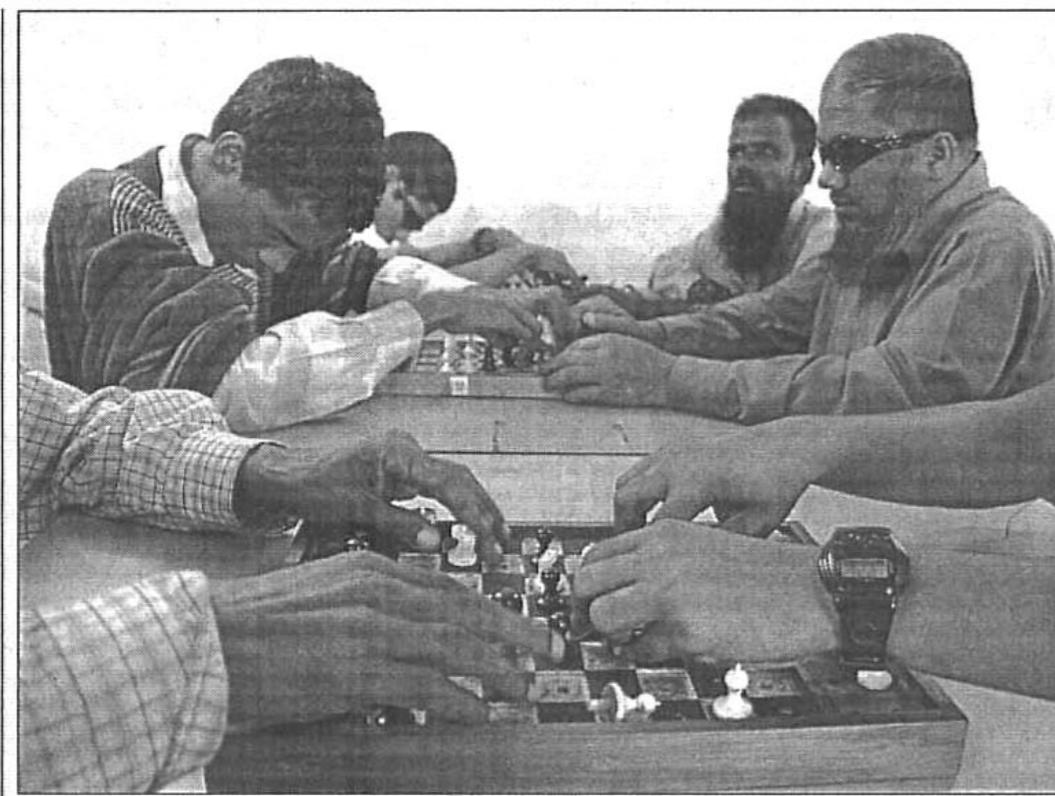
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Brazilian teams have dominated the Club World Cup -- Sao Paulo smashed Liverpool 1-0 in 2005 and Internacion whipped Barcelona by the same score last year.

Palermo, who scored twice in Boca's 2-1 victory over Real Madrid in the 2000 Intercontinental Cup, said he was getting ready to ruffle the nest.

"At this stage, I'd only said it would be great if I can score again," he said. "The goals I scored against Real Madrid were something special and I never forget the moment I scored them. It will indeed bring me happiness if I can score such special goals this time."

Boca will Wednesday play the winners of Sunday's quarter-final between Mexico's Pachuca and the Etoile Sahel of Tunisia.

"I have studied various reference materials on both teams and they have many important players," Russo said. "We have to be careful about their front line. We must think about how we defend in that part and stop the ball. We also want to go attacking ourselves."



The picture shows visibly impaired players deeply engrossed in the war of wits during the third round of the Grameenphone 8th National Special Chess tournament at the chess room of the National Sports Council yesterday.

Malaysia U-19s in city

SPORTS REPORTER

Malaysia Under-19s cricket team arrived in Dhaka yesterday to play a few practice matches as part of their preparation for the upcoming World Cup which they will host next February.

The Southeast Asian visitors, under the guidance of former BCB high performance coach Shahidul Alam Ratan, will play two two-day games and a limited-over match against BKSP Under-19 team.

During their month long trip they will also play four one-day matches against the selection of BCB's Under-19 development squad.

7 share lead in Special Chess

SPORTS REPORTER

Seven players were sharing lead in the 8th Special National Chess Tournament after the third rounds on Saturday.

Kamal Hossain, Ajgor Ali, Tofazzal Hossain, Mir Hossain, Ferdous Hasan, Nazmul and Monir Rana all had three points after the second day's competition where 62 players from several districts and Dhaka city are participating.

The event, organised by Bangladesh Braille Chess Society, is sponsored by Grameenphone.

Aminul Islam Khan, Secretary of National Sports Council, officially inaugurated the meet yesterday at the NSC conference room.

India's great gift

PTI, Melbourne

India can hope for a bright start to their tough tour of Australia with the Melbourne Cricket Ground expected to offer a surprise slow track for their first Test, which would be a worrying factor for the hosts.

"Lucky India is poised to unravel the ultimate Christmas gift surprise - a Boxing Day Test pitch with all the trappings of a super-flat, subcontinent track," the Australian media reported.

Batsmen were seen struggling on the pitch during Australia's domestic competition -- Pura Cup clash between Victoria and New South Wales this week.

While Brad Hodge claimed that the sluggish pitch would "promote boring cricket", former Test stars Alister Clarkson and Darren Lehmann said it would be a worrying factor for the hosts.

"What we need is to prepare wickets that suit our cricket rather than the Indians," said Border.

"It is slow and low the Indians really come into the contest. They like that sort of surface. That is the worrying thing for me. You should try to get a bit more bounce - it doesn't have to be sideways movement - then it will suit our cricket," the former captain added.

Lehmann said it was justified to provide bouncy tracks to India on their tour Down Under.

Peru suspend

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Chelsea striker Pizarro last year quit the team, saying he would not play while Franco Navarro was coach. He was then banned by the federation but returned this year after Navarro's contract was not renewed.

Peru have taken two points from their first four World Cup qualifiers, have scored only two goals and the bans will leave them even shorter of firepower.

Peruvian football has been plagued by in-fighting among the directors for years and the country has not qualified for a World Cup since 1982.

The players are often accused of indiscipline but in turn complain of harassment by the country's tabloid newspapers and television stations.

It's the Muntari

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Glen Johnson rolled the ball to Muntari, who unleashed a fierce long-range strike that flashed past Carson into the roof of the net.

Once again James kept out Agbonlahor before the break. This time beating out his snapshot and Villa trudged off feeling it wouldn't be their day.

Muntari had already proved his ability to score from distance, so Villa had only themselves to blame when he repeated the trick after they squandered possession in the 61st minute.

Nigel Reo-Coker was tackled by the Ghanaian, who nutmegged Zat Knight and used the outside of his foot to bend a 25-yard strike past Carson.

Villa were given a glimmer of hope when Sylvain Distin gave away a 72nd minute penalty for a foul on Young.

Barry smashed the spot-kick past James. But Villa's bid for a dramatic comeback faded when Olof Mellberg shot wide and Agbonlahor powered a header against the bar.

Australia to meet Germany in final today

Hockey

AFP, Kuala Lumpur

World number one Australia started into the Champions Trophy hockey final with a 5-0 win over Germany.

Australia will now play Germany again in Sunday's final, making it a repeat of the 2002 World Cup final, which Germany won 2-1.

South Korea had been the favourites to make Sunday's final but ended their winning streak on a 2-2 draw with Britain.

After missing several early chances, Australia finally broke through with Russell Ford in the 23rd minute and never looked back.

Travis Brooks scored a solo effort in the 25th, before Edward Ockenden made sure of victory in the 40th with his fifth goal of the

tournament and added another through Liam de Young (51st) and Luke Doerner (63rd).

Australian coach Barry Dancer said it was great to be in the final but he expected a different German side on Sunday.

In other matches, Spain recorded the biggest win of the tournament here Saturday by downing hosts Malaysia 7-2 in their last group match of the Champions Trophy.

All eyes were on Spain and the world number fours did not disappoint, leading 4-0 at half time thanks to some amazing attacking and midfield play.

David Alegre started the rout with a thunderous shot inside the circle in the 20th minute. Victor Sojo followed suit three minutes later while a double strike from veteran Eduard Tubau (25th and 26th) quickly put the score at 4-0.

Malaysia came out firing in the second half when Chua Boon

Huat slammed in from close range in the 39th and Selvaraju Sandrakasi in the 42nd.

But that was all the home side could muster as Spain regained control, adding three more when Alegre bagged his brace in the 45th before Xavier Ribas (47) and Eduard Arbos (62) also scored to complete one of the most one-sided matches seen at this tournament.

Britain stunned the South Korean defence when Matt Daly scored a thunderous first timer in the opening six minutes.

The Koreans found the British defence tough to crack and had to wait until the 45th minute before Seo Jong-ho connected from close range.

Richard Mantell scored in the 60th through a penalty corner to go one ahead but Korea immediately answered with a goal in the 62nd through Lee Nam-yong.

Prior's faith in bowlers

Cricket

BBC ONLINE, undated

Matt Prior insists England have what it takes to level the series against Sri Lanka in Colombo despite the absence of fast bowler Matthew Hoggard.

Hoggard misses the second Test, which starts on Sunday, with a back injury, and Prior told BBC Sport: "Losing him would be a massive blow for us."

"But Steve Harmison, Stuart Broad and Graeme Swann are all firing in the nets so whoever comes in can do the job."

"We know what we must do and we're sure we can turn this series on its head."

Hoggard, who has 246 wickets from 65 Tests, impressed with figures

of 4-29 in the first innings in Kandy.

But he broke down with the injury whilst bowling in the second innings of the 88-run defeat to the hosts in the first Test.

The Yorkshireman was able to bat on the last day - with a runner - but he missed Friday practice, and skipper Michael Vaughan later confirmed his absence.

And with the likes of Kevin Pietersen, James Anderson and Ryan Sidebottom also having to cope with niggles, England's preparations for the second Test could have been smoother.

However, Prior insisted: "Obviously we'd like everyone to be fully fit, but on tours like this you do get the odd niggle and injury and you can't afford to be a distraction."

"This is the ultimate squad effort out here and everyone is backing each other up and supporting each

other."

"And the whole squad - especially those who weren't fortunate enough to play in the first Test - have certainly been putting the work in off the pitch to ensure we're ready for Colombo."

Traditionally a turning pitch, Sri Lanka captain Mahela Jayawardene sprung a surprise before the match by hinting the hosts will still play only one spinner.

And England must decide whether to imitate that move and replace Hoggard with another seamer - Harmison or Broad - or play a second spinner in Swann.

But Prior has no worries about any of them being less than match ready, saying: "They all look in exceptional rhythm in the nets."

"We know exactly what we have to do and we're all determined to do and we're all determined to ensure the fightback starts in earnest on Sunday."

Eriksson dreams big

FROM PAGE 20
Yet Tottenham have been far from invincible at White Hart Lane and lie perilously close to the relegation zone.

Juanito Ramos has made a good start to his reign as Spurs boss but the feeling remains that his side are at the back and often lack a real creative spark in midfield.

Ramos could take heart from the way they emerged unscathed from a hostile atmosphere against Anderlecht to book a place in the next round of the UEFA Cup.

But the Spanish coach admitted

he is more concerned with avoiding a survival scrap than competing for silverware.

"At the moment we are closer to relegation than we are to the European places. It's the reality," he said.

"So we're left with no alternative but to fight against this and get as many points as possible."

"And if we're capable of coming out of this situation we will think about something better. But at this moment this is the reality."

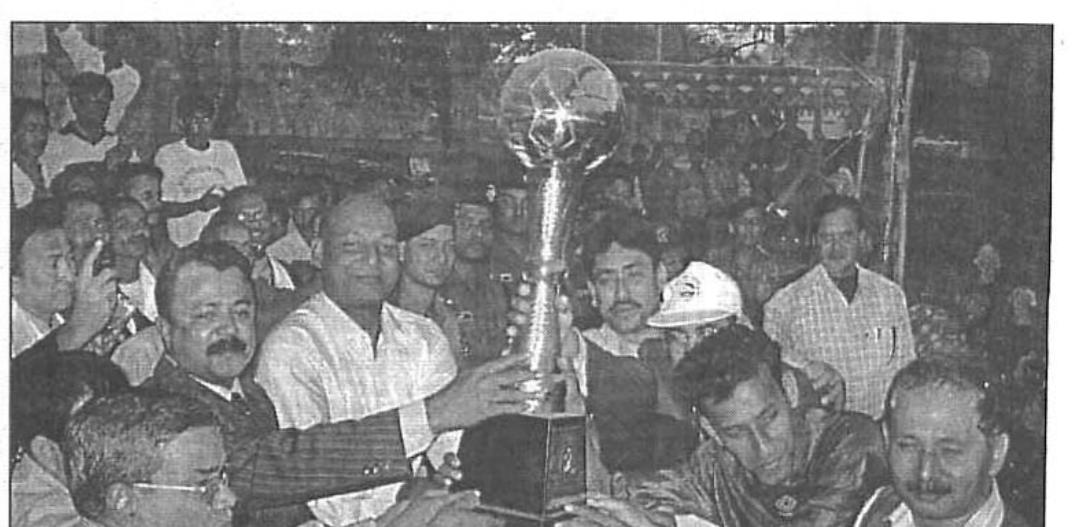
"It's of massive importance that my players don't think they're too

good to go down but concentrate on winning some games and then looking up the table," he said.

"Good results help players restore their confidence and from then on we will see if we're capable of doing something better."

"Let's get to mid-table first and then we will have to think about going a bit higher."

Spurs captain Robbie Keane starts a three-match ban, while Eriksson is without suspended midfielder Didi Hamann and will give late fitness tests to Elano and Emile Mpenza.



Players of officials of Parbottipur Young Star Club receive the Manik Sarker Gold Cup Trophy from SP of Dinajpur Mostafa Kamal at the Fulbari College ground yesterday. Young Star won the final against Gobindpur in the tiebreaker.

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS	35	Layover	DOWN	23	Bond, e.g.
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