

Eves' football final today

SPORTS REPORTER

Rangamati will face hosts Dhaka in today's final of the Inter-district women's football tournament.

The final will kick off at 3pm at the Dhamondi Women's Sports Complex.

LGRD Adviser Anwarul Haq will distribute prizes as chief guest.

Rangamati defeated their Hill Tracts neighbours Khagrachhari 2-0 in the first semifinal while Dhaka ousted Narayanganj by an identical margin.

Lalmonirhat win by 49 runs

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Gaibandha

Lalmonirhat defeated Rangpur by 49 runs in the national under-14 district youth cricket competition at the local stadium yesterday.

Having won the toss and decided to bat first, Lalmonirhat scored 140 all out in 36.3 overs. Then they bowled out the visitors for only 91 runs.

Rangpur will take on Lalmonirhat in today's match.

Victory Day Sports

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh Army clinched the Total Victory Day basketball tournament title when they edged Bangladesh Navy 69-63 in a keenly contested final at the Shaheed Suhrawardy National Indoor Stadium in Mirpur yesterday.

Mithun and Tojammal dominated the show with scores of 20 and 17 respectively for Army, who led 36-21 at the break.

The sailors enjoyed a better second half with Rashid caging 20 points and Lutfar 19 but their efforts could not help Navy cover the first-half deficit.

Earlier, Army ousted BKSP 97-41 in the first semifinal while Navy beat Josephites 72-62 in the second semi.

BKSP's Mithun was adjudged player of the tournament.

VOLEYBALL

Bangladesh Navy will play Bangladesh Air Force while Bangladesh Army are pitted against Bangladesh Rifles in today's semifinals of the Victory Day Top-Five volleyball tournament.

Both matches will be held at the Dhaka Volleyball Stadium, where Bangladesh Air Force blanked Water Development Board 3-0 in the last group match yesterday.

In the women's series, Bangladesh Ansar beat Bangladesh VDP 3-1 at the same venue.

KABADDI

UNB adds: Bangladesh Rifles and Bangladesh Army advanced to today's final of the Victory Day kabaddi competition.

On Friday, Army outplayed Bangladesh Navy 60-20 and Bangladesh Police beat Bangladesh Air Force 51-20.

GYMNASTICS

The daylong Victory Day gymnastics competition will be held at the NSC gymnasium on December 18. The competition will be held in senior, junior (men, women, boys and girls) divisions.

KARATE

The Bangladesh Karate Federation will organise the daylong Victory Day karate training camp at the Mirpur Shaheed Suhrawardy Indoor Stadium today.

On completion of the camp, DMP Commissioner Nayeem Ahmed will distribute prizes among more than 200 participants.

Younis willing

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Younis had been the official vice-captain for two years under Inzamam-ul-Haq and was widely expected to take over once Inzamam resigned. At the time of his refusal, he also stepped down from the vice-captain's role, before surprisingly accepting for the tour to India.

"I only agreed to be vice-captain for the Indian tour because of the importance of the series. If the matches had been against any other team I might not have accepted this responsibility.

"But now if the board feels I can be a good Test captain, I am willing to do it but after talking to them," he said. "If the team can do well under my captaincy I would be very happy but I am not asking anyone for the job. This is the board's prerogative whatever they want to do."

The board has, however, once again expressed its full faith in Malik to retain the post until December 2008.

Lankan U-19s

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SCORES IN BRIEF

SL U-19: 165 all out in 48.5 overs (Thirimanna 47, Janith 38, Silva 42, Pathirana 14, Rubel 3-21, Nasir 2-37, Shuva 1-28, Mahmudul 3-41).

BD U-19: 151 all out in 48.4 overs (Ashraf 12, Marshall 90, Mahmudul 13, Rubel 20, Fernando 4-20, Peres 1-33, Pathirana 4-25).



Rajshahi paceman Mohammad Shahjada (C) exchanges high-fives with captain Khaled Mashud after they combined to dismiss Chittagong skipper Ehsanul Haque for 66 during the first day's play of their National Cricket League match at the Rajshahi Divisional Stadium yesterday.

Hoggard to be fit

Cricket

BBC ONLINE, undated

Swing bowler Matthew Hoggard could be in line for a return to the England team in time for the third Test against Sri Lanka which starts on 18 December.

The 30-year-old missed the second Test draw in Colombo after being plagued by a back injury in the opening match.

"The medical team tell me he is progressing nicely," said England skipper Michael Vaughan.

"Hopefully come Sunday and Monday he is available for selection. Having Hoggard fit will be a real bonus."

Hoggard suffered the injury while bowling on the fourth day of the 88-run first Test defeat and had to ask for a runner when batting on the final day.

The Yorkshire bowler, who claimed six wickets in Kandy, has been dogged by injuries all year.

He missed the last Ashes Test in Sydney, broke down in the first Test of four against the West Indies, and made just one further start for England last summer.

And England coach Peter Moores says Hoggard will not be forced into action in Galle if there is any risk of the injury recurring.

"Matthew has bowled two spells pretty well flat out so we will see the reaction he gets to it," Moores told BBC Radio 5 Live.

"He got a little bit of pain on a couple of balls which shows that it is not quite there but we are still four days off a Test match. He will bowl a couple of spells on Saturday and Sunday and then we will see how it goes."

"We can only play him if there is no risk that anything will happen because the conditions out here mean that if you did lose a bowler, then it would become very difficult to get 20 wickets."

Moores believes his side goes into the third Test full of confidence as they try and square the series.

He says he is particularly pleased with England's batsmen, particularly with the way the dealt with leading Test wicket-taker Muttiah I in the second Test.

I took only one wicket from 27 overs in the second innings in Colombo and Moores added: "We are gaining momentum."

"I don't know if Sri Lanka are

losing momentum but we are gaining it because we are playing Murali better all the time.

"We also played their seamers well so our batsmen are getting settled and are ready to produce that score we will need to win the Test match."

"We have got another three or four days to get our plans together and I think we will go there quite confident, if we play good cricket we can win the game."

The third Test in Galle will be the first since the Boxing Day 2004 tsunami devastated the southern Sri Lankan coast.

And Sri Lanka skipper Mahela Jayawardene says walking out at the re-built international stadium will be "an emotional thing".

"A lot of our guys come from down south and they have lost quite a few relatives in the tsunami," he said.

"But we have moved forward as a nation and a team, we just need to concentrate on the cricket in hand."

"I think it is going to be more of a celebration at Galle rather than anything else. We will remember the people but it is a fresh new start for us in that province."

Destiny 2000 shock Biman

SPORTS REPORTER

Destiny 2000 pulled off the first upset of the First Division Chess League yesterday when they defeated holders Bangladesh Biman 2.5-1.5 in the third round.

Enamul Hossain Rajib, the Bangladesh International Master who reached the second round of the World Chess Cup in Russia last month, held Grand Master Ziaur Rahman of Biman to a draw in the first board before Destiny's FIDE Masters Minhazuddin Ahmed and Taibur Rahman won their matches against FM Mehdi Hasan Parag and FM Abu Sufian Shakil.

Only GM Abdullah Al Rakib collected full point for Biman, beating FM Sheikh Nasir Ahmed.

With 7.5 points, Destiny topped mid-table Biman who are half a point adrift.

Pritam Prijam took solo lead with 11 points when they blanked i2 Soft Solutions 4-0 while Mohakhali Pradip Sangha followed the leaders with 10 points after winning 3-1 against Toyota Motors.

Last year's runners-up Leonine, who are third with 9.5 points, drubbed Faith 4-0 while Chittagong Mohammed edged Dhaka University 2.5-1.5, Sultana Kamal Smriti Pathagar beat Sonali Bank 3-1 and Farashganj drew with Friends in the other matches.

Norman, Evert engaged

AFP, Paarl

Golfer Greg Norman and former tennis star Chris Evert on Friday announced their engagement.

Evert revealed the couple, both aged 52, were engaged Sunday. The former tennis ace showed off an engagement ring but said no plans had been finalised for a wedding.

Norman, who won two British Open titles among 88 professional golf titles worldwide, is currently playing in the South African Open at Pearl Valley.

Evert, who won 18 Grand Slam titles, was announcing the establishment of a Chris Evert tennis centre at the Pearl Valley estate where Norman is expected to design a second golf course to go along with the Jack Nicklaus-designed championship layout being used for the SA Open.

Norman and his first wife Laura announced in June that they had reached an agreement on dividing an estimated 500-million-dollar fortune amassed by the former world number one during his golf and business career.

Evert has been married twice, to tennis player John Lloyd and skier Andy Mill.

Sultan's claims

FROM PAGE 17

"The federation officials met me at different times. I always try to attend people when they want to meet me. I also inaugurated the professional football league. So it is not right that I have not given them time."

"His (Sultan) remarks about the media are tasteless. The duty of the media is to report and make sports more popular. This type of comment is unacceptable."

Meanwhile, the rumours around the resignation of Sultan strengthened last night.

The BFF's adjourned meeting on Wednesday will resume today and the BFF president is expected to tender his resignation in this meeting to put an end to the rumour of the last few days.

It can be noted that Anwarul Hoque Helal, the general secretary of the executive committee, resigned a few months earlier. Last year, vice-president Kazi Salahuddin also stepped down.

Shoaib regrets Eden act

Cricket

AFP, New Delhi

Stung by criticism over his form and fitness on the India tour, Pakistan speedster Shoaib Akhtar on Friday vowed to regain his reputation as one of the most fearsome bowlers in the world.

An inconsistent Pakistan lost the one-dayers 3-2 to their archrivals before a 1-0 drubbing in the three-match Test series, their first defeat in India in the longer version of the game in more than two decades.

Akhtar, 32, failed to live up to his tag of match-winner, struggling with his fitness in the last two Tests, which saw him frequently limp off the ground.

While he picked seven wickets from four one-dayers, a half-fit Akhtar could only manage nine from three Tests, prompting legendary Pakistan cricketer Imran Khan to question his place in the side.

Akhtar, dubbed 'Rawalpindi Express' for his raw pace, however said it was unfair to judge him harshly as he was making a comeback to international cricket after a lengthy 13-match ban.

"I want to come back strongly and prove my worth to everyone. It is not easy to regain your rhythm after not playing for so long," he told AFP in an interview here.

"I know where the faults are now, personally I have learnt a lot from this series."

Akhtar admitted that he should not have played in the Kolkata Test. "In hindsight I shouldn't have played but I was only trying to serve my country and do the right thing."

Akhtar, no stranger to controversies, was banned primarily for striking teammate Mohammad Asif with a bat ahead of the inaugural Twenty20 world championships in South Africa in September.

"One should not forget that it



SHOAIB AKHTAR

was my comeback series, I agree I am not in the peak of my fitness but I gave my best. I tried the best that I could," Akhtar said.

Akhtar, who even had to be hospitalised on the eve of the second Test in Kolkata for a chest infection, said Pakistan needed more match-winners in the side.

"I can't win Test matches on my own. Imran had players like (leg spinner Abdul) Qadir and Wasim (Akram) to back him up or Sarfraz

Prasad asks to adapt

Cricket

REUTERS, New Delhi

Indian bowling coach Venkatesh Prasad is confident his young new ball bowlers can adapt quickly to bouncy Australian pitches after toiling on flat tracks in the home test series win over Pakistan this week.

The ex-India paceman said the tour starting next week would push the players but the team were confident thanks to their recent wins and bowling consistency in varied conditions.

"It is going to be a very challenging series down under," Prasad told Reuters on Friday. "It will be exciting competition and all the players will be pushed to the limit in terms of technique, tactics, mentally and physically."

India leave on Monday for Australia to play in a four-test series starting on Dec. 26 followed by a one-day tri-series also featuring Sri Lanka.

India are on a high after a one-day and test double over Pakistan but their pace attack is injury depleted. Skipper Anil Kumble and Harbhajan Singh are the spinners.

The pacy Shanthakumaran Sreesanth has a shoulder injury and Munaf Patel has been dropped due to a lack of sharpness.

Among the five chosen, only left-armers Zaheer Khan and Irfan Pathan have previously played in Australia while young left-arm RP Singh missed the Pakistan tests through injury.

India are hoping they can at least repeat their performance on the last tour in 2003-4 when they drew the test series 1-1.

Ishant Sharma, 19, is two tests old but took a five-wicket innings haul in the drawn final test while Pankaj Singh, 22, is uncapped, although their height could prove handy on bouncy pitches in Australia.

"Our bowling is a bit inexperienced," Prasad said.

"We might have played on flat tracks but I'm very confident we'll be ready to adapt because they have done it before."

He added: "Both Ishant and Pankaj have got fantastic talent and

lot of potential. They only have to work hard on fitness and be open to ideas."

Prasad was appointed in April and the team have since won test series in Bangladesh and England. Indian bowlers also shone in the Twenty20 World Cup win in South Africa in September.

"We've been talking about adaptability, that is our mantra," he said. "We've shown a lot of adaptability in terms of pitch conditions, weather and playing against different teams."

However, he said the lack of a gap between series was preventing injury recovery for fast bowlers with flat home pitches like those used against Pakistan making their life tougher. "If we have to develop fast bowling then we need to look at the pitches as well," he said. "People ask 'why can't we produce quick bowlers?' How can we if the bowlers who want to bowl quick are bowling on flat wickets."

"They tend to reduce their pace after a game or two and rely on swing, movement," he said.

Shahjada rips Ctg

FROM PAGE 17

When Sajidul Islam took a return catch to dismiss Mehrab, Barisal were eyeing a bat on the first day. But Mosharraf Hossain and Mohammad Sharif took Dhaka out of another rut, scoring 35 and 30 respectively after Sajjad Kadir retired hurt on 9.

Left-armers Sajid and Tariqul Islam took two wickets each.

BRIEF SCORES

CHITTAGONG: First innings 198 all out in 76.4 overs (Salahuddin 0, Masum 10, Mahubul 4, Nazimuddin 13, Dhiman 50, Ehsanul 66, Faisal 5, Kamrul 11, Yasin 7, Tareq 14*, Younus 11; Shahjada 4-36, Saiful 3-70, Mahubul 1-8, Farhad 1-16, Alamgir 1-56).

RAJSHAH: First innings 24-2 in 9.2 overs (Jahurul 9, Robulul 8, Farhad 2*, Shakil 3*, Kamrul 1-9, Tareq 1-14).

SYLHET: First innings 228-6 in 90 overs (Imtiaz 15, Kuntal 19, Rajin 2, Alok 36, Golam Mabud 53, Ejaz 6, Rahman 78*, Saif 5*, Aslam 2-47, Robulul 2-51, Murad 2-54).

DHAKA: First innings 215-6 in 83 overs (Al Shahbari 16, Uttam 16, Anwar 8, Mehrab 33, Mahmudullah 12, Nadif 39, Sajjad 9, Mosharraf 35*, Sharif 30*, Sajidul 2-34, Tariqul 2-74, Talha 1-38, Arafat 1-41).



PHOTO: INTERNET

BYE BYE BOOF: Former Australian batsman Darren Lehmann takes a lap of honour with his children before the start of the Australia-New Zealand match at the Adelaide Oval on Friday.

'Tait dispute inspired us'

CRICINFO, undated

Ricky Ponting has dismissed the fracas surrounding Shaun Tait's action as 'absolute rubbish' and called New Zealand's insinuations 'a bit disappointing'. But he admitted nevertheless the situation motivated Australia to victory in the Chappell-Hadlee Series opener in Adelaide on Friday.

"It seems to be their opinion," Ponting said. "To air it publicly is a bit disappointing I suppose, but what can you do? It probably just makes us a bit hungrier to go out there and play some good cricket against them."

He said he couldn't see anything wrong in Tait's action, which hasn't been questioned before, and wasn't reported to the match referee after the Twenty20 match on Tuesday. "He's got my full support, it all looks pretty good to me," Ponting said. "I think everyone handled it well and Shaun especially. When things like that come up that are absolute rubbish you dismiss them."

Ponting himself contributed a chanceless century in the seven-wicket win on Friday, while Tait took three priceless wickets, including a crucial double-strike which punctured New Zealand's momentum and left them 30 runs short of a par score.

Daniel Vettori clarified his position after saying on Thursday: "You ask Braces [coach John Bracewell] that one" when asked if he had an issue with Tait's action. "I never meant to insinuate that he was a chucker," Vettori said on Friday. "There is a process in place if you feel a bowler has an illegal action and obviously we haven't gone through that process."

He preferred to accentuate the positives out of the defeat, in particular New Zealand's ability to handle the pace. Although they came up short on a flat track, Brendon McCullum's 96 to push them past 250 gave them a psychological boost. "It certainly helps," Vettori said. "We were obviously coming in off question marks about whether we could play pace or not. I'd like to think we answered that today."