

## WOMEN'S CRICKET Rajshahi record first victory

### SPORTS REPORTER

Dhaka and Rajshahi won their respective matches of the Meril Women's Divisional cricket tournament in the city yesterday.

Rajshahi bounced back after opening day's defeat to Khulna when they crushed Chittagong by 52 runs at the Dhanmondi Club ground, thanks to Panna Ghosh's brilliant-round performance.

Panna, who made 87 in Rajshahi's 182 all out in the stipulated 35 overs, later captured four wickets for 20 runs as her side restricted Chittagong to 130 for nine.

Jerin and Fatema made 23 and 22 respectively for the losers.

Dhaka, playing their first match, cruised to a five-wicket victory against Khulna at the Dhaka University ground.

In reply to Khulna's 162-7, Dhaka reached 163-5 with nine balls to spare with Chameli topscoring 35. Earlier, Chameli was the peak of the Dhaka attack with 3-16.

## Lawson seeks opinions

### AFP, Sydney

Pakistan cricket coach Geoff Lawson said Friday he is seeking advice on the situation in the volatile country before deciding whether to return following the assassination of Benazir Bhutto.

The former Australian fast bowler is at home in Sydney with his family and is scheduled to return to Pakistan in the next two weeks.

Lawson could not say what impact the death of Bhutto, who was killed Thursday in a gun and bomb attack in the northern city of Rawalpindi, would have on his own future with Pakistan cricket.

Lawson is five months into his two-year contract with the Pakistan Cricket Board and has a get-out clause in his deal if he decides not to return.

His family has remained in Australia during his stay in Pakistan, where he is based in Lahore.

"I'm making informal investigations with people I know in Pakistan to get their opinions," Lawson said here.

"I've sent a few emails this morning just to people I know in Pakistan in different areas to get their opinions.

"I'm very open (to what they say) and I'm more likely to take into account what they've got to say rather than any officials. I'm just seeking advice, I'm not pre-judging anything."

Anger over Bhutto's death has triggered violence that has left at least 10 people dead.

The unrest across the country has also cast doubt on Australia's scheduled cricket tour there in March.

Lawson was appointed Pakistan coach in July after the death of Bob Woolmer during the World Cup in the Caribbean.

## Clarke counts on reverse swing

### CRICINFO, undated

Michael Clarke believes reverse-swing holds the key to wrapping up the first Test as Australia eye a four-day victory at the MCG. Ricky Ponting set India an unlikely 499 win and the visitors have the added disadvantage of surviving on a slow pitch offering low bounce.

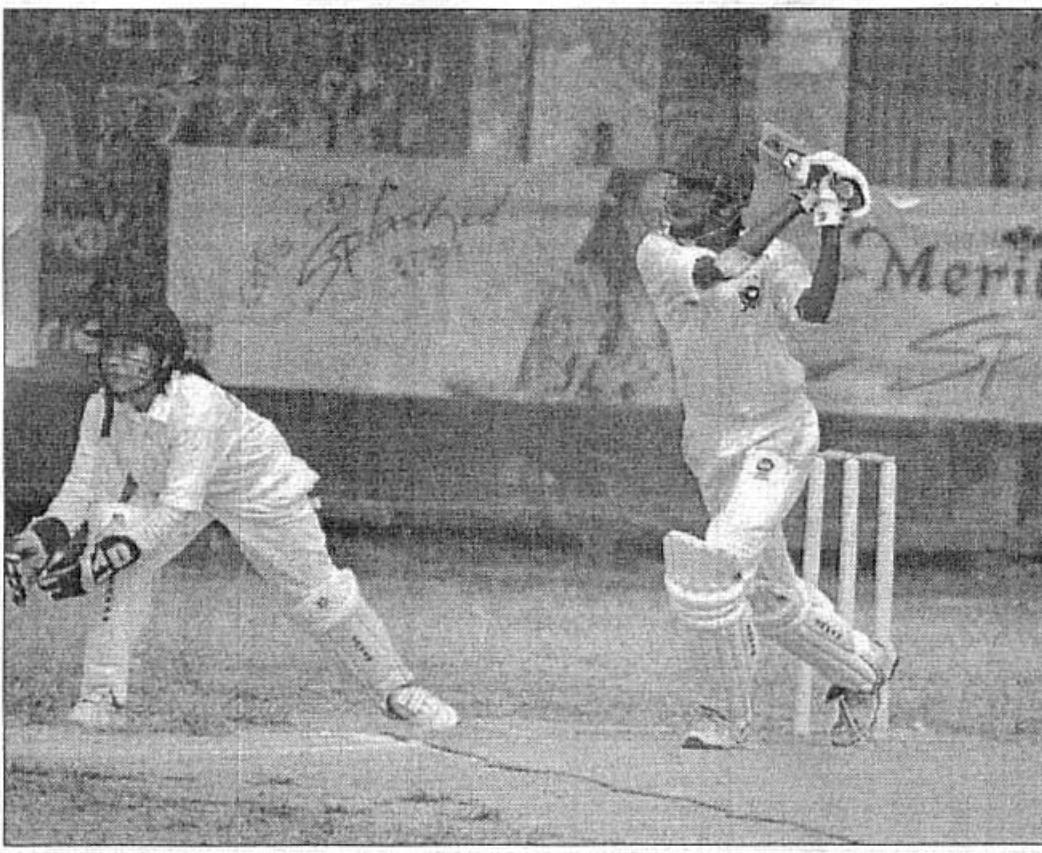
Clarke top scored for Australia with 73 in their 7 for 351 declared and found the late movement and sluggish surface challenging during his 113-ball stay. "At times it was difficult, it's really hard to start your innings," he said. "Once the ball gets a bit older and softer it's difficult to score so you have to be as patient as possible."

Stuart Clark gained significant movement in the first innings and Brett Lee and Mitchell Johnson are also capable of causing swing problems for India, who survived the eight overs before stumps without losing a wicket. "Once the ball gets older reverse-swing will play a part, and all three bowlers are good exponents of it," Clarke said. "When the ball is reverse-swinging it's very hard because you don't know which way it's going. And when the ball gets soft India will find it hard to score."

"I'd like to say India have no chance, but they need 493 runs, so the reality is they can get it. But if we bowl well and hold our chances there's a possibility we could win it [on day four]."

India struggled to 196 in the first innings and Harbhajan Singh blamed India's lack of practice matches for the poor performance. The only lead-up fixture, against Victoria in Melbourne, was washed out and the players face a severe test to save the game.

"We didn't get much time, we didn't get any side game," Harbhajan said of the preparation. "It's totally different conditions for batsmen and bowlers so it takes time for people to adjust on these sorts of wickets. That was the reason we got out in the first innings. The last time we showed our batsmen can bat for long times and if they just play to their potential they can definitely surprise."



Rajshahi's Panna Ghosh, who won the player-of-the-match award for her 87 runs and four wickets, in action during batting against Chittagong in the Meril Women's Divisional Cricket Tournament at the Dhanmondi Cricket Ground yesterday.

## Yuvraj in trouble

### AFP, Melbourne

Indian batsman Yuvraj Singh has been charged with showing dissent towards an umpiring decision during the first cricket Test against Australia, Cricket Australia said Friday.

Yuvraj lingered at the crease and showed his disappointment at umpire Billy Bowden's decision to give him out caught behind off the bowling of Stuart Clark for a duck just before tea on day two.

The batsman will face a hearing with match referee Mike Proctor after Friday's third day's play at the Melbourne Cricket Ground, a Cricket Australia spokesman said.

Yuvraj faces a fine if he is found guilty at the hearing.

## Zaheer gets Wasim help

### PTI, Melbourne

Zaheer Khan was roundly booed by Indian supporters at the MCG for the flurry of no-balls but apparently there was a reason to it.

Zaheer was working on the bowling tips by the Pakistani legend Wasim Akram who had asked him to completely redo his bowling style for the present tour of Australia.

Akram had advised Zaheer to understand that his method of swinging the delivery, as he did so brilliantly in England this summer, would not work in Australia.

"It would help if he was to just come and release the delivery in Australia as he did in England. There is a different method to obtaining swing in this part of the world," Akram said.

Zaheer was asked to run in quicker than he normally does and instead of just releasing the ball, he should look to hit the deck on Australian pitches.

Zaheer worked on the advice and turned in a brilliant performance at the MCG in both the innings, never mind there were a dozen no-balls in Australia's second innings.

Even though he grabbed just a wicket in Australia's second innings, he troubled all Australian batsmen as he had done during his four-wicket haul in the first innings.

India have to defy Test history and score 493 more runs to beat Australia over the two remaining days of the Boxing Day Test.

Harbhajan's Test career high point was his 32 wickets at 17.03 in

## 'Hard to repeat 2001'

### Cricket

#### APP, Melbourne

Spin bowler Harbhajan Singh says he has shouldered unrealistic expectations since his career-high achievements during India's famed home series win over Australia in 2001.

The finger-spinner made the comments after putting in his best bowling performance in Australia with 3-101 off 26 overs during the third day of the first Test here Friday.

Harbhajan's performance on Friday made him only the fourth Indian bowler to pass 250 Test wickets.

He now has 251 wickets and lies fourth all-time in Indian cricket behind teammate Anil Kumble (591), Kapil Dev (434) and Bishan Bedi (266).

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Harbhajan's Test career high point was his 32 wickets at 17.03 in

the three-match home series against Australia in 2001, a remarkable feat he says he has struggled to repeat during his career.

"From the time I took those 32 wickets, whenever I didn't get wickets, people expected me to do the same thing, it's not easy to do things like that."

It happens once or twice in a lifetime," the 27-year-old said.

"It's good to have expectations but you can't really do anything about it, you just go and try to bowl well for my team."

"I've played enough cricket now and I know in the tough conditions how to handle things, I was very raw when I came in to play in 2001; I was young and all over the place."

"There wasn't that much responsibility for me then and things have now changed and there is a lot of responsibility not just in bowling and batting, but also off the field."

Harbhajan captured the big wickets of Matthew Hayden (47), Ricky Ponting (3) and Adam Gilchrist (35) to make Friday a special day.

Harbhajan claimed his 250th

wicket with the dismissal of world cricket's No.1 rated batsman Ponting for the sixth time.

"There's no doubt that Ricky Ponting is a very good player, but I have some sort of success against him, I don't know how and why," he said.

"It's always good to get good batsmen out and I'm very happy to get his wicket again and it was my 250th Test wicket and that means a lot in getting a great player out."

Harbhajan won't discount India's hopes of overturning cricket history and winning the first MCG Test.

"Obviously, it's a stiff target, but I won't say it's not achievable," he said.

"With the kind of batting lineup we have, if we play to our potential anything can happen in cricket and this is a good wicket to bat on."

"I'm sure our batsmen are looking forward to going out and showing some character tomorrow."

"We're here to win the series, we're not looking to draw the match and we'll try our best to win this game. We're going to give it our best shot."

## India shut out

### Cricket

#### CRICINFO, undated

to get injured when there is a short gap between matches. By declaring Ponting has challenged India to bat 98 overs to take the game to the final day while giving his fast men the incentive for a rest on Sunday before the serious training resumes in Sydney.

The huge benefit of the high speed of Australia's scoring is they have so much time to dismiss their opponents, which rules out the need for sporting declarations. When Ponting closes the innings, the opposition has virtually no chance of success unless a miracle can be conjured. He has rarely needed to rush his decision and only once, against South Africa in 2005-06, did it result in a draw.

The question floating around the MCG throughout the third day was when would Ponting consider he had enough? He finally called his men off with about 45 minutes remaining and it was a positive step towards the end of a day, when Australia traded aggressive flair for grinding. A four-day victory would extend the turnaround between the Melbourne and Sydney Tests by 24 hours and, when it comes to back-to-back Tests, Australia are

Setting targets is one of the great games played by a team in command. Australia have done it a lot under Ricky Ponting and he still doesn't know when a chase is too small. At home, he has not lost a Test and he has become less generous in the size of his declarations over the past couple of years.

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