

V-DAY HOCKEY

Army thrash Navy in opener

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh Army trounced Bangladesh Navy 5-0 in the opening match of the Dhaka Bank Victory Day hockey tournament with Didar and Sirajul slugging a brace each.

Army led the first half 1-0 at the Maulana Bhasani National Hockey Stadium with Didar breaking the deadlock after half hour.

Sirajul made it 2-0 early into the second half but what looked like a tight win at one stage turned big as the soldiers notched three goals in the last six minutes with Jamal, Didar and Sirajul finding the mark.

Dhaka Bank chairman Abdul Hai Sarker declared the meet open.

NZC outlaws ICL players

AFP, Wellington

Six former New Zealand cricket representatives who took part in a rebel Indian league this month have effectively been barred from a return to national selection.

Without making a direct order, New Zealand Cricket (NZC) has strongly suggested its selectors never again consider Chris Cairns, Nathan Astle, Craig McMillan, Daryl Tuffey, Chris Harris and Hamish Marshall.

Chief executive Justin Vaughan said Sunday NZC did not support the rebel Twenty20 league and would prefer New Zealanders who played in the series did not represent their country.

"I don't think we can say that they're ineligible for selection. We'd prefer to say that the selectors will be encouraged to consider other players," Vaughan said.

"There's an understanding that we don't support the ICL (Indian Cricket League) and that we don't want to give them unnecessary traction."

Of the six, Tuffey and the ever-green Harris are the only players still playing domestic cricket in New Zealand and only Tuffey realistically had a chance of making the New Zealand team.

Cairns, Astle and McMillan have retired over the past two seasons while Marshall abandoned his NZC contract this year to play English county cricket on a full-time basis.

Symonds may skip Pak tour

AFP, Sydney

Australia all-rounder Andrew Symonds Sunday cast doubt on whether he will join the scheduled tour of Pakistan given the violence over the assassination of opposition leader Benazir Bhutto.

Symonds said he would avoid Pakistan if he felt the country was not safe, adding that there was growing concern within the team about the planned tour.

"I'm not interested in going into a situation that's dangerous, where people are getting killed and hurt," he told The Sunday Telegraph.

"At the end of the day it's a game of cricket. I take my cricket very seriously and I love playing for Australia, but I'm not going to put myself in a situation where I can be harmed."

"There's no need, not for a game of cricket."

In Lord

FROM PAGE 17 Although it is a city of roughly 14,000 locals the population can shoot up to the 100,000 mark during the New Year's Eve and at the moment Queenstown is swarming with tourists. It also augers well for Monday's match at Queenstown Events Centre where there could be quite a sizable crowd enjoying cricket in a pleasant 18 degrees.

One is spoilt for choice and can do so many things and so much here. Queenstown is legendary for bungy jumping, jet boating and rafting. For the daredevils there is skydive where you freefall at 200kph towards the breathtaking landscape below from as high as 15,000 feet. Although the usual suspects in the team did fancy a dare or two in the mind they have to wait for another day and a preferably a non-cricketing trip because visiting players are prohibited by New Zealand Cricket to attempt outrageous adventures like bungee and skydiving.

The team only had a swimming session scheduled and no cricket training today. They did however gather at their meeting room for a discussion where the bowlers and batters split into two groups offered own evaluation of their collective performances so far in the ODI series and set the objectives for the third match. Coach Jamie Siddons is a staunch believer of the importance of individuals taking their own and also team responsibility and has stressed on the need for the cricketers to become leaders. This city is also fit for the leaders and a matter of fact was named Queenstown because it was thought to be the ideal destination for Queen Victoria.



Ex-footballers and kids pose for photograph during yesterday's draw of Mohammedan Sporting Club's Victory Day football tournament at the club premises.

Johnson relieved

Cricket

CRICINFO, undated

Mitchell Johnson ended a Test he was not sure he would play in with an enhanced reputation and the hope India's batsmen would see him as a threat for the rest of the series. A mid-match chat with Troy Cooley, Australia's bowling coach, helped Johnson achieve more swing in the second innings and his burst of three wickets finished the game late on the fourth day.

However, Johnson had to survive a close battle to appear on Boxing Day after the push for Shaun Tait grew when he replaced the left-arm for the Chappell-Hadlee Series. Johnson's variety and tight control, which was a feature of the home fast bowlers in Melbourne, were crucial elements as India were dismissed for 196 and 161.

"There was a bit of concern there (about my spot)," he said after the team had completed a

recovery session at a Melbourne beach. "It took me by surprise, being dropped from the one-day squad."

While Australia's spin options are limited, there is strength in the fast-bowling stocks and the backup is led by Tait, who remained in the 12-man squad for the second Test. There will be no way in for Tait in Sydney after the 337-run win in Melbourne, but Johnson is still not feeling secure about his place. After 11 wickets in three Tests he has made a promising start and is safe for a couple of games at least. Johnson delivered an immaculate line outside off stump at the MCG, which was the plan to frustrate the Indians into rash shots, and he gave away less than two runs an over.

In the first innings he opened with five maidens to Rahul Dravid and after not picking up any wickets or much swing he talked to Cooley. The upshot was a straighter wrist position on day four and some dramatic movement. MS Dhoni and Anil Kumble were

caught behind in the same over, setting up a speedy finish, and Johnson was proud to seal the win by bowling RP Singh.

"Getting three wickets was a bit of a relief," he said. "In the first innings I didn't have any luck, so it was good to get those wickets at the end and to get it reversing was a good sign."

Fourteen victims in the one-day series in India helped demystify the opposition and he was not intimidated bowling to Tendulkar, Laxman, Dravid and Ganguly. "Hopefully the Indians are thinking about me," he said. "I just tried to back myself and not think about who was at the other end. Once you start to think about who you are bowling to and how good they are you might struggle a bit."

He played a sizeable role in demolishing the tourists for sub-200 totals in both innings. Hogg's performance and his unbeaten 35 in the second innings with sixes off Indian spinners Anil Kumble and Harbhajan Singh has guaranteed him a further match in Sydney and clouded the Test future of injured leg-spinner Stuart MacGill.

After weathering an early onslaught from Sachin Tendulkar on day two, Hogg regained composure and became a dependable option for Ponting, suffocating the Indian batsmen with a full length, and befuddling them with his wrong'un.

"I'm sure the run rate will pick up and we have the batting to do that. Going forward I'm confident we have the batting line up to be positive and do well."

"It's just a matter of going out there and batting freely. We didn't do that in our two innings."

"Maybe it was the (lack of) preparations. They (batsmen) didn't have enough time to adjust to the conditions and go out and bat freely and play their natural game."

"It is something we will discuss and make sure they are relaxed and positive when they go out on the field."

One of the team considerations will be whether to bring back either one of the unused openers, Virender Sehwag (4,155 runs at 49.46) or Dinesh Karthik (931 at 32.10), put Dravid back to No.3 and drop No.6 Yuvraj Singh.

Yuvraj was one of the major disappointments for India in the opening Test with scores of a duck and five, lethargic in the field, and receiving a charge of dissent from the umpires, for which he was subsequently found not guilty.

Hampshire batsman Pietersen and Taylor, who topped the British singles charts with her former band Liberty X, married at St Andrew's Church in the picturesque village of Castle Combe in Wiltshire, south-west England.

Henry Jacob of The Outside Organisation, which represents both the 27-year-olds, said: "We can confirm that on Sunday Kevin Pietersen and Jessica Taylor were married."

"The private wedding was attended by close family, relatives and friends of the couple. They are now going away on their honeymoon and will return to the UK in January."

Former England fast bowler Darren Gough was Pietersen's best man. England Test captain Michael Vaughan and one-day international skipper Paul Collingwood were among the stars in attendance.

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Ponting lauds Hogg

AFP, Sydney

Australia skipper Ricky Ponting says spinner Brad Hogg will be a better and more confident bowler in Wednesday's second cricket Test against India at the Sydney Cricket Ground.

Hogg, singled out as a weakness by the Indian team before the Boxing Day Test in Melbourne, responded with four match wickets, including Sourav Ganguly twice, in Australia's huge 337-run victory inside four days.

The left-arm wrist-spinner delighted Ponting and his teammates with his clever use of the "flipper" or faster ball which brought Ganguly undone.

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Gayle's great outing

Cricket

AFP, Port Elizabeth

New West Indian captain Chris Gayle hailed a "thrilling" win against South Africa as a career highlight and said the challenge for his young team was to continue to improve.

"It's really thrilling to beat South Africa in four days," he said after a 128-run triumph in the first Test at St George's Park here on Saturday.

Asked whether he had been involved in a better West Indian win, he said: "It's the best one so far because we have a lot of young players, inexperienced guys. It's really pleasing to see the way they operate under pressure."

It was the first away Test win for the West Indies, other than against minnows Bangladesh and Zimbabwe, since they beat England by an innings and 93 runs in Birmingham in June 2000.

Set 389 to win, South Africa succumbed to consistent pressure from the West Indian fast bowlers and were bowled out for 260.

After years of being pilloried as world cricket's most prominent under-performers, Gayle said leading in a series was a new challenge for the West Indies.

He said the team would celebrate on Saturday night before starting to prepare for the second

Test of the three-match series, starting in Cape Town on Wednesday.

"The challenge is how we cope with it. We will have to stick to basics and play some good cricket," said Gayle.

South African captain Graeme Smith said his team needed to bounce back, as they had done in home series against India and Pakistan last season when on both occasions they clinched the series by winning the final match.

"We let ourselves down on day one when we allowed them to bat the way they did and then we didn't bat well enough in our first innings," said Smith.

"We have got to rebound. We've done it before. We know we're better individually and as a team than what we showed in the past four days."

Smith defended a decision to rest several of the key South African players ahead of the Test because of a gruelling schedule over the next year.

"Three days of rain didn't help our preparations but we have no excuses," he said.

South Africa were never in contention on Saturday after slumping to 45 for four, although Jacques Kallis (85) and AB de Villiers (60) provided resistance in a fifth wicket stand of 112, while Andre Nel (34) and Dale Steyn (33

not out) delayed the end with a hard-hitting ninth wicket partnership of 67.

South Africa's troubles started early when Daren Powell dismissed Herschelle Gibbs for his second duck of the match. Fellow fast bowler Fidel Edwards built up impressive pace to claim the wickets of Hashim Amla and Smith as South Africa slumped to 20 for three.

Kallis and Ashwell Prince survived until lunch but Prince fell to Jerome Taylor four balls after the interval, edging a low catch to Gayle at first slip.

Kallis was in outstanding form as he reached his half-century off 70 balls with seven fours. He was unlucky to be given out after a 126-ball innings when an attempted hook against Edwards deflected off his shoulder to wicketkeeper Denesh Ramdin.

De Villiers was eighth man out when he drove Taylor to mid-on.

The match was effectively over but Nel and Steyn hammered 67 runs off 60 balls before Nel was caught behind off Darren Sammy, with last man Makhaya Ntini driving man of the match Samuels to mid-off in the next over for Powell to hold a catch.

When the final wicket fell, the West Indians gathered with arms linked and danced in the middle of the field.

Rajput declines changes

Cricket

CRICINFO, undated

Down but not out. That seems to be the mood in the Indian camp after suffering a 337-run loss in the opening Test at the Melbourne Cricket Ground. In terms of runs it was India's worst defeat in Australia but the side is giving off vibes of being confident enough to bounce back.

The team chose not to practise Sunday, despite leaving for Sydney Monday, only two days before the second Test begins. There is a feeling that the batsmen need to free up the cobwebs in the mind, changing their mindset and breaking the over-defensive mode. "We were a bit too defensive during some phases," the assistant coach Lalchand Rajput said, "but we need to change our mindset. We have a

few strategies and you can expect a better showing in Sydney."

In an informal team meeting last evening, the mood was one of disappointment rather than shock. The Australian bowlers hadn't so much stunned the Indians as much as thwarted them with a planned approach.

"It's not as if it's something new to us," Rajput said when asked about the Australian strategy of drying up the runs and applying pressure. "The Australians are usually one up on the mind games and we need to make sure we avoid the same mistakes in the next Test."

Predictably the main focus of the meeting surrounded the approach of the batsmen. Though they had endured a collective batting failure, the concern seems to have surrounded set batsmen giving it away. Four Indian batsmen passed 20 in the first innings, and two of them did the same in the

second, but India couldn't manage to pass 200 in either innings.

"It's a one-off Test and it's not the time for drastic changes," Rajput said. "We are looking to work on our batting approach, our intensity on the field and our running between the wickets. Everyone knows there is a problem about taking singles and rotating strike. We have to be hard on them in that aspect."

There hasn't been talk of changes in the team composition, insiders confirmed. Any big change immediately after such a loss would appear too knee-jerk and the plan is to take a final call on the playing XI once the team has an idea of the SCG pitch. There was no practice scheduled on Sunday or Monday and the side was only planning a few informal meetings to work on the mental side of its game.

Revenge for Rajshahi

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nine boundaries.

CHITTAGONG-DHAKA

Ehsanul Haq played a perfect captain's knock as he ensured Chittagong got a draw out of their match with Dhaka.

The former Bangladesh batsman played 265 balls, hitting ten fours and a six. He found support from Dhiman Ghosh, who scored 43.

When Dhaka bowled out Chittagong for 436, they had to score 219 runs but when play ended, they reached 130-4 in 21.4 overs.

Dhaka replaced Chittagong in third place and it is certain that they won't go up the table.

BRIEF SCORES

Rajshahi: 188 and 284

Khulna: 151-9 dec and 292 all out in 99.4 overs (Nazmus 24, Imrul 24, Murad 0, Mostafiz 57, Jamal 86, Nahid 3, Sahagir 8, Farid 41, Ziaur 1, Robul 0, Aslam 27, Saqlain 6-101, Farhad 2-80, Mushfiqur 1-13, Shafiq 1-41).

Result: Rajshahi won by 29 runs

Man-of-the-match: Saqlain Sajib Chittagong: 98 and 436 all out in 165.3 overs (Mahbubul 4, Mazhar 1, Yasir 1, Nazimuddin 80, Masum 118, Ehsanul 117, Salahuddin 21,

Dhiman 43, Kamrul 12*, Tareq 9, Sajir 6; Mosharraf 3-109, Arafat 2-79, Nadif 1-17, Mahmudullah 1-57, Sharif 1-60).

Dhaka: 316 and 130-4 in 21.4 overs (Mazhar 23, Arman 43, Mahmudullah 0, Anwar 46, Nadif 1*, Shamsur 0*, Sajir 2-30, Yasir 1-13, Ehsanul 1-14).

Result: Match Drawn

Man-of-the-match: Masumudowla Sylhet: 183 and 166 all out in 62 overs (Imtiaz 57, Rahman 3, Sadiqur 0, Nabil 6, Alok 3, Mabud 57, Sharifullah 10, Ejaz 0, Rezaul 0, Rashedur 11*, Rinku 14; Arafat 5-44, Monir 3-51, Rokibul 1-9, Bashir 1-17).

Barisal: 383-5 dec

Result: Barisal won by an innings & 34 runs

Man-of-the-match: Arafat Salauddin

Arjuna

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become the deputy foreign minister in the government reshuffle, expected to take place early in the New Year.

He has been critical of the current cricket administration, which he blames for the dwindling of Sri Lanka's talent and reserve stock to replace the ageing national team.

Hammers stun MU

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Bolton pulled a goal back five minutes before half-time when El-Hadji Diouf's 30-yard free-kick edged everyone in the box.

Daryl Murphy settled home nerves in the last minute to give Roy Keane's men only their fourth league win this season.

Michael Essien scored his first goal in two months as Chelsea went ahead just short of the half-hour mark at home to Newcastle.

But former Manchester United midfielder Nicky Butt made it 1-1 in the 56th only for Kalou to keep the Blues in the title hunt.

"Unfortunately for us, the game's been taken away by somebody we can't control," said Allardyce. "It was a clear offside by two or three yards. You don't know why the assistant referee couldn't have put his flag up."

Wigan, fresh from a win over Newcastle, went ahead at the JJB Stadium when a 28th minute corner from Ryan Taylor was headed in by Titus Bramble.

But Villa, fresh from a 4-4 draw

with Chelsea, were level in the 55th minute through a Curtis Davies header and with 20 minutes left the visitors were ahead after striker Gabriel Agbonlahor headed in an Ashley Young cross.

Fulham, with new manager Roy Hodgson waiting in the wings, took an eighth minute lead against Birmingham when Carlos Bocanegra, the United States international defender, headed in a corner from Wales's Simon Davies.

But Fulham were pegged back 10 minutes after half-time when Birmingham's Sebastian Larsson scored from 20 yards out.

The Cottagers then held on for a draw after Hameur Bouazza was sent-off 11 minutes from time.

Middlesbrough scored the only goal of their game in the 20th minute when Pompey old boy Gary O'Neill, in his first match back at Fratton Park since his transfer, had a cross-shot parried by keeper David James and Turkish striker Tuncay Sanli turned in the loose ball from close range.

V-Day soccer

FROM PAGE 17

questioned," he added. It would be difficult to play football and do the repairs simultaneously and many believe that Mohammedan should have scheduled the meet immediately after the Victory Day instead of setting a January 1 start.

With ex-footballers like Badal Roy, Kaiser Hamid, Rumman Wali Bin Sabbir, Mohsin, Kanan and Manik gracing the draw in presence of cheerleaders, Mohammedan were pitted against Arambagh, Victoria and Youngmen's Club Fakirerpool in Group A.

B. League champions Abahani drew Muktioddha, Wanderers and Badda Jagarani in Group B.

The ex-booters later took part in a six-a-side match.

Mohammedan officials Lokman Hossain Bhuiyan, Monir Ahmed, Mostakur Rahman were also present.

Organising committee convenor and former national football captain Zakaria Pintoo unveiled the logo.