

## Bangladesh meet India in U-19 final today

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh will meet India in the final of the Under-19 limited-overs triangular series today in South Africa.

The show-off between the two subcontinent teams, who made the final pairing at the expense of the hosts, will be played at the Sinovich Park in Pretoria.

The young Tigers lost their last league match on Sunday by one run under the D/L method to India, who reached 161 for five in 39.3 in a rain-interrupted match after Bangladesh had scored 219-9 in 50 overs.

India, who brushed Bangladesh by 66 runs in the first-leg league match, entered the final with an all-win record.

Bangladesh defeated South Africa by two wickets in the opener but their second meeting was washed out.



## Did U Know?

Andy Roddick (born on August 30, 1982) is an American professional tennis player and a former World No. 1. He became a Grand Slam singles champion when he won the title of the 2003 US Open.



## Ian Chappell

(Australian cricket legend)  
"Batsmen usually say to each other 'you take care of this bowler etc'. [In] this match the Indians might have to say you take care of Bucknor, I will take care of Benson."



## Badda on top, Jatrabari stun Arambagh

SPORTS REPORTER

Badda Jagarani stormed to the top of the Senior Division Football League table with their second win yesterday.

Badda, who won their first round game 2-1 against Jatrabari KC, edged City Club by a solitary goal at the Birshreshtha Shaheed Mostafa Kamal Stadium in Kamalapur with Shamim scoring six minutes from time.

Badda have maximum six points after two matches.

In the day's other match, a 44th minute strike by Ohidul helped Jatrabari upset top-seed Arambagh 1-0. Arambagh are the only team in the competition to have played in the country's inaugural professional football league -- the B. League -- although they are using only a second string side.

Victoria will play Purbachal in today's lone match at 3pm.



Khulna players erupt in ecstasy after the fall of the final Barisal wicket during their National Cricket League match at Khulna Divisional Stadium yesterday.

## AFC names Abahani for President's Cup

SPORTS REPORTER

B. League champions Abahani's participation in the AFC Cup looked uncertain as the Asian Football Confederation (AFC) yesterday confirmed that the Dhaka giants will play in the AFC President's Cup.

The AFC organises three continental club tournaments every year with the top nations representing the prestigious Champions League, the mid-level sides competing in the AFC Cup and the bottom-category countries getting the President's Cup.

The Bangladesh clubs earlier participated in the AFC Cup but last year, there had been no entry as the Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) failed to organise any league in 2006.

As 2007 professional league winners, Abahani were supposed to win an AFC Cup berth but the sky-blues have been pitted against

SEE PAGE 18 COL 7

## Mosharraf is Rafique's pick

Cricket

SPORTS REPORTER

Dhaka's left-arm spinner Mosharraf Hossain finished as the highest wicket-taker after his match winning six-wicket burst against Rajshahi in the tenth and final round of the 9th National Cricket League at the Mirpur Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium yesterday.

The stunning success in the last game also brought him the man-of-the-match award but undoubtedly in the end what made the lanky spinner most happy was the comment of his senior teammate Mohammad Rafique.

"What I believe is that Rubel (Mosharraf Hossain) should be in the squad for the upcoming home series against South Africa. I honestly believe that he is now ready to become a worthy successor of me,"

ace Rafique reflected on his young fellow's 44-wicket haul in the country's first-class competition.

The obvious question that then arose is the future of the long-serving cricketer but the veteran spinner seemed unbothered about the prospect, instead smilingly

SEE PAGE 18 COL 6



MOSHARRAF HOSSAIN

## Players rally round Bhajji

CRICINFO, undated

India's players have often been criticised for not standing up when it counted but on a day of high drama, they seemed to have done just that. They sent out a message saying they wouldn't leave Sydney until there was more clarity on the ban handed to Harbhajan Singh and decided to stick together through this crisis.

The players had a meeting that lasted close to two hours, where no member of the support staff was present, and they decided to stick firmly behind Harbhajan. They were hurt at the match referee's verdict and wouldn't accept the fact that one of their teammates had been branded a 'racist'.

The players, set to leave for Canberra at 10:30 am, sat in the coach for close to two hours before returning to their respective rooms

SEE PAGE 18 COL 3

## Simmo tells his side of the story

CRICINFO, undated

Andrew Symonds says he was surprised by the on-field incident that led to Harbhajan Singh being suspended for three Tests because there had been "no bad blood" in the series before that moment. The match referee Mike Procter found Harbhajan guilty of making a racist comment directed at Symonds while Harbhajan was batting in the Sydney Test, although India can appeal the decision.

"This is what happened before our confrontation," Symonds said in the Herald Sun. "Brett Lee had just sent down a delivery and Harbhajan took off down the wicket. When he was returning to his crease, he decided to hit Brett on the backside. I have no idea why he did it."

SEE PAGE 18 COL 6

## Khulna it is

SPORTS REPORTER



The dramatic last round of the 9th National Cricket League saw Khulna regaining the first-class title after four seasons when they handed a 63-run defeat to Barisal at the Birshreshtha Shaheed Flight Lieutenant Matiur Rahman Stadium in Khulna yesterday.

Khulna took the opportunities with both hands after the fate of the title race swung their way following nearest rivals Rajshahi's second-innings batting debacle at the Mirpur Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium, where hosts Dhaka recorded an exciting three-wicket win.

The victors dedicated the triumph to their former teammates --

Manzarul Islam Rana and Sajjadul Hasan Shetu -- who died in a road accident in March last year.

It was a big turnaround for Khulna, who slumped to the bottom of the table last season and most importantly, they achieved it without their star players in the last few rounds.

They, however, owed one to Dhaka left-arm spinner Mosharraf

Hossain who picked up two more wickets yesterday to return with figures of 6-13 and make sure there was no tail-end recovery by Rajshahi in the second essay.

Resuming the day on 59 for seven, Rajshahi -- who began the tenth and final round one point adrift of Khulna -- were bundled out for 77 to set a meagre 130-run target for the home side.

A middle-order Dhaka hiccup, however, revived Rajshahi's hopes at one stage but Mahmudullah Riyad and stand-in skipper Mohammad Sharif guided their team home just before the tea break.

Rajshahi's only remaining hope to regain the trophy was a draw in Khulna but the determined home team made no mistake to bowl out Barisal before reaching a stiff target of 302.

In terms of record, Rajshahi finished two wins ahead of their rivals with five victories but they lost three matches. Khulna lost only one match which finally settled the issue.

The new system of batting and bowling bonus points in addition of handsome financial package brought huge excitement in the

SEE PAGE 18 COL 2

## ROLL OF HONOUR

Year	Champions	Runners-up
1999-2000	Chittagong	Sylhet
2000-2001	Birhan	Chittagong
2001-2002	Dhaka	Rajshahi
2002-2003	Khulna	Dhaka
2003-2004	Dhaka	Sylhet
2004-2005	Dhaka	Rajshahi
2005-2006	Rajshahi	Chittagong
2006-2007	Dhaka	Rajshahi
2007-2008	Khulna	Rajshahi

## POINTS TABLE (FOUR-DAY)

TEAM	M	W	L	D	BB	BB	TOTAL
Khulna	10	3	1	6	22	40	108
Rajshahi	10	5	3	2	18	37	103
Dhaka	10	4	1	5	20	37	101
Chittagong	10	4	2	4	16	40	98
Barisal	10	3	6	1	15	37	80
Sylhet	10	0	6	4	15	36	61

## Tour in the balance

### India put it on hold pending Harbhajan appeal

Cricket

REUTERS, Sydney

The Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) has suspended its team's tour of Australia pending the outcome of an appeal for banned spinner Harbhajan Singh.

Although there is no suggestion the tour will be cancelled, the BCCI ordered its players to remain in their Sydney hotel rather than travel to Canberra for their next practice match.

BCCI vice-president Ravji Shukla told Reuters a decision on when the players would leave Sydney and resume training would be made within the next 24 hours.

"Tomorrow at seven (7 am) we have convened a working committee meeting. All these issues will be decided there," Shukla said.

"Officially I can only say that the team is in Sydney. Team manage-

ment has already said the BCCI has given them directive to stay back in Sydney."

The BCCI released a statement saying it had taken the stance to protect the honour of their nationals after Harbhajan was handed a three-match suspension for racially abusing Australian all-rounder Andrew Symonds during the second Test in Sydney.

The spinner strongly denies the charges.

"The Board will appeal to the International Cricket Council (ICC) to review the decision of the Match Referee and suspend its operation till the appeal is disposed of," the BCCI said.

"The Indian Board realises the game of cricket is paramount but so too is the honour of the Indian team and for that matter every Indian."

"To vindicate its position, the Board will fight the blatantly false and unfair slur on an Indian

player."

Cricket Australia chief executive James Sutherland told reporters in Melbourne that he had been assured the tour would proceed.

"The chairman of Indian cricket overnight made a commitment that it would and that's good enough for me," Sutherland said.

Sutherland proposed a peace meeting between Australia captain Ricky Ponting and Indian skipper Anil Kumble to try and resolve the escalating crisis.

Emotions began to boil over immediately after the match when Kumble accused the Australians of bad sportsmanship, evoking memories of Bill Woodfull's criticism of England during the 1932-33 'Bodyline' series.

"In the course of the next few days it is time for the two captains to get together and have a chat," Sutherland said.

Ponting said the Australians

SEE PAGE 18 COL 3

## 'It leaves sour taste'

Cricket

AFP, Sydney

Australian media Monday slammed the umpires for their performance in the crucial Sydney Test, urging the skippers to pull their teams into line after bitter rows over racism and sportsmanship.

Tensions boiled over in the aftermath of the hard-fought match between Australia and India, with Indian spinner Harbhajan Singh banned by the International Cricket Council (ICC) for three Tests for racially abusing Andrew Symonds, while Kumble accused Australia of unsporting behaviour.

The match, which ended Sunday, will be remembered for the bitter disputes rather than Australia's sensational 122-run win courtesy of three wickets in the penultimate over of the final day.

Australia's cricket writers condemned the conduct of the players and the performance of the

umpires for tainting what they said was an engrossing contest.

"It is shameful this splendid Test match, won in such a remarkable fashion by the indomitable Australians, has left such a bitter taste," The Australian's cricket columnist Mike Coward wrote.

"The standard of play often was outstanding and occasionally exceptional but the standard of player behaviour was questionable and, at times, unacceptable. And the standard of umpiring was poor."

"Captains Ricky Ponting and Anil Kumble will have to demonstrate their strength as leaders to ensure the balance of this series for the Border-Gavaskar Trophy is played in a decent manner."

Peter Roebuck, writing in The Sydney Morning Herald, said: "India have been duded. No one with the slightest enthusiasm for cricket will take the least satisfaction from the victory secured by the local team in an SCG Test that entertained spectators, provided some excellent batting but left a sour taste."

"It was a match that will have been relished only by rabid nationalists and others for whom victory and vengeance are the sole reasons for playing sport."

Former captain Steve Waugh urged the rival captains and coaches to prevent the series spiralling out of control.

"Heading up a slew of hot topics was the Harbhajan-Symonds exchange. That quickly spiralled out of control, with emotions overriding the need to think clearly and concisely about the ramifications," Waugh wrote in the Daily Telegraph.

"Perhaps a better outcome may have been for both captains, coaches and named players to get together at the end of the day's play and work out a solution before they went past the point of no return -- which now has the potential to affect relations between both countries."

The third Test is scheduled to take place in Perth from January 16-20 and the fourth from January 24-28 in Adelaide.

## ICC stands by umpires

Cricket

AFP, Sydney

The International Cricket Council (ICC) said Monday it had no plans to bow to Indian demands to remove umpire Steve Bucknor from the third Test against Australia in Perth later this month.

The Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) has demanded Bucknor be removed after criticism of the way the Jamaican and England's Mark Benson officiated during the explosive second Test in Sydney.

But cricket's governing body said it had no plans to change officials amid fears the fuming Indians could pull the plug on their Australian tour.

"We have not received anything from the BCCI at this point in time,"

an ICC spokesman told the Australian Associated Press. "We have no plans to change the appointments."

Several key decisions during the second Test incensed India, who insisted they might not have lost to Australia by 122 runs had half the incorrect decisions gone their way.

The Indians were also angered by spin bowler Harbhajan Singh's three-match ban for racially abusing Australia's Andrew Symonds during the bad-tempered Test at the Sydney Cricket Ground.

Bucknor has been appointed along with Pakistan's Asad Rauf to officiate in the third Test between January 16 and January 20. Benson is not scheduled to take part.

Cricket Australia chief executive James Sutherland indicated he was against nations having a say on umpire selection.

"As I understand it there's spe-

cific detail within the playing regulations and the appointment of umpires that make it clear as to who appoints umpires," he told reporters in Melbourne on Monday.

The BCCI have not indicated the Indian tour of Australia was going to be cancelled, Sutherland said, adding the BCCI and Cricket Australia were still discussing issues arising from the Sydney Test.

Australian captain Ricky Ponting, left steaming after he fell victim to an incorrect call during the second Test, came to the defence of the umpiring fraternity, saying the "human element" was one of cricket's great charms.

Ponting said he opposed calls for the use of more technology to help umpires, which were made again after the second Test, but added that players should not be honour-bound to aid umpires by walking

account the performance of the umpires.

"If the rule were more fair, Benson would have won it in a close race against Bucknor. Aussie captain Ricky Ponting would surely concede to his mates that the two umpires did more than any of them to win this match for the home team," it said in a leading front page story.

The Hindustan Times was equally severe in its condemnation, detailing each of the umpiring decisions in the Test that gave Australia a record-equalling 16th consecutive Test win under the headline "Fingers that killed India."

The newspaper said the win did no credit to Australia, "for what

happened over this Test was not a good advertisement for the world champions. It was just not cricket."

"Team India c Benson b Bucknor," read the headline in the Indian Express, which also lambasted the umpires.

"In a match where Venkatsai Laxman and Sachin Tendulkar kept their trust with the Sydney Cricket Ground, umpire Steve Bucknor too managed to maintain his record," the paper said.

"After some very poor umpiring by Bucknor and Benson saw India go down by 122 runs and 0-2 in the series, skipper Anil Kumble, sources said, gave Bucknor a zero in his captain's report -- just what Sourav Ganguly did in the last

SEE PAGE 18 COL 1



Indian cricket fans display banners during a protest in Kolkata against the three-match ban slapped on Harbhajan Singh on Monday.

PHOTO: AFP