V-Day hockey final today

SPORTS REPORTER

Sonali Bank will look forward to maintain their all win run in the Dhaka Bank Victory Day hockey tournament final today when they meet Bangladesh Army.

The final will start at 2.45pm at the Maulana Bhasani National Hockey Stadium.

Army, who lost only one match -- 3-0 to the bankers -- in the sixteam league -- on way to final, will seek revenge after edging other contenders BKSP.

Bangladesh Hockey Federation president and Air Force Chief Air Marshall SM Ziaur Rahman is expected to attend the final as chief guest.

Victory Day TT ends today

SPORTS REPORTER

Binti clinched the girls' singles title in the Victory Day table tennis tournament defeating Cynthia in the final at the Woodenfloor Gymnasium yesterday.

Regan and Auntu will clash in the boys' singles final today, the concluding day of the three-day meet. Regan ousted Himel while Auntu beat Palash by identical margins of 4-0 in the semifinals.

Soma and Rumi will vie for the women's singles final today after eliminating their opponents comfortably.

The men's competition reached the semifinal stage with Edison, Shahed, Manash and Pappu being the last four men standing.

COACHING CAMP

A three-week table tennis coaching camp will begin tomorrow at the Woodenfloor Gymnasium for the rising stars of the game. A total of 32 boys, girls and female players have been selected for the camp, which will be held with assistance of ITTE

Former Indian champions and ITTF coach Kamalesh Mehta, who will attend the camp for a week, is expected to reach Dhaka today. The ITTF will donate US dollars 2500 for the purpose.

Sourav admires

FROM PAGE 17 Hogg and claims of poor sports-

manship by the Australians. - There was also widespread criticism of the standard of umpir-

ing, with Bucknor being axed from the upcoming third Test at Perth's WACA Ground On top of that there was talk of

India abandoning the tour, before they decided to go ahead with the match against the ACT XI.

However, Ganguly said spirits were high in the Indian camp, although he admitted he went into the Test series under-prepared. "It's a happy team," he said.

Runs flow

FROM PAGE 17 Kingsmead on Friday: WEST INDIES: First innings 139 SOUTH AFRICA: First innings (overnight 213-1) Smith c Ramdin b Taylor Gibbs b Powell Amla c Bravo b Sammy Kallis c Morton b Samuels Prince not out De Villiers not out Extras: (b-4, lb-7) Total: (For 4 wkts in 97 overs) To bat: Boucher, Pollock, Nel, Steyn, Ntini. Fall of wickets: 1-53, 2-252, 3-252,

4-374 Bowler 1 120 Powell 0 129 Edwards 64 Taylor 70 Sammy

43

Real ready

Samuels

showpiece.

FROM PAGE 19 African Nations Cup with Mali internationals Seydou Keita and Frederic Kanoute - two of their best players - leaving for the Ghana

Sevilla have closed to within three points of the European places ahead of Saturday's trip to Athletic

Bilbao. With Sevilla falling out of the Champions League frame Espanyol and Atletico Madrid have come to the fore and both are

breathing down Barcelona's necks. "The Catalans are starting to remember that there is another great team from the area," said Luis Garcia. "We are similar to Sevilla last season in terms of our league position and the football we are playing."

Espanyol lie third, a point behind neighbours Barcelona, and continue their European push at Almeria on Sunday.

Atletico are two points behind Espanyol in fourth and host freefalling Valencia in the game of the weekend.

After an opening day derby defeat to Real, Atletico have surged up the standings while Valencia have slumped to seventh having not won since mid-November.

Atletico face Real in the derby next weekend and Argentine international Maxi Rodriguez and winger Jose Antonio Reyes are walking a tightrope with one more caution ruling them out of the Real clash.



Jatrabari KC kabaddikas successfully hold a raider (M) from neighbouring Matuail Milon Smriti Sangsad in yesterday's EXIM Bank Women's Kabaddi League match at the Outer Stadium kabaddi court.

Shaking Ponting's tree

Cricket

PETER ROEBUCK

From a distance the SCG Test match was a beauty. Five contrasting hundreds, plenty of wickets, fine weather, large crowds and a thrilling finish - cricket at its best.

Why then did a state selector walk away in disgust? Why did a club official send an email protesting about the behaviour of the national side? Why was a highly regarded opposing captain so upset that for only the second time in 130 years an international team was condemned as unsporting? Why have great Australian sportsmen condemned the conduct of the team? Do they still think it is a media beat-up?

Throughout its course it was clear the Test was hovering on the brink of calamity. A Test match has a history, a mood, a progression that requires constant attention. Indeed, that is the only justification for investing so much time in a single contest. It is a tale of revealed humanity. And this Test had a death

Throughout its course it was clear the Australians were oblivious to the mounting dismay they were generating in their own community. After taking the last wicket the players celebrated rapturously. Meanwhile many lovers of the game felt empty and wondered whether they were alone. They cared about the game and their country and the national team, and resented having to choose between them. Politicians apologised to the Indian high commissioner. Patently the players had lost touch. Afterwards they were stunned by the reaction. No one had told them. But you do not see many children running around in Ricky Ponting Tshirts. It is all David Beckham.

The debacle began on the opening day and owed something to bad umpiring. Everyone had been looking forward to a worthwhile contest only to be denied by umpiring blunders. The only people unable to study the merits of an appeal are those called upon to make the decision. Already the unsettled state of the Australians had been exposed, with the captain losing his rag and his protege mak-

ing an unaccountable error. India rallied and it seemed possible the match might survive. The third day stymied any such hopes. By stumps it was obvious that the tour was in danger. From the moment Andrew Symonds and Harbhajan Singh fell into argument the position was perilous. Actually it was not so much the row as the response that has been the prob-

lem. It is not much of a tale. Harbhajan patted Brett Lee on the backside with his bat, to which the bowler did not take exception. Symonds felt called upon to make some remark. According to the Australians, Harbhajan responded with a racist remark. It is plausible. Previously he had been told that

words of this sort give offence. Now the Australians faced a critical choice. Already the match had been highly contentious. Already their opponents were feeling aggrieved. After the Haneef case, an entire community was feeling disaffected. Moreover, India had a new man at the helm in Anil Kumble, an intelligent and respected figure who had not been given a chance to deal with incidents of this sort. Harbhajan had immediately apologised and his esteemed partner had tried to calm things down. It had all come out of the blue. Nevertheless Ponting and his kitchen cabinet decided to put the wheels of justice in motion. Australians like to think they play hard and fair. In fact, they define these terms domestically. Multiculturalists believe this lies behind the narrowness of the local game.

The rest was inevitable. The Indians felt the anger was manufactured and a mountain had been made out of a molehill. Australia's excesses on the final day, the pursuit of victory at all costs, the failure to embrace opponents at the end, the indignation when their words were questioned, reinforced the resentment. The hosts seemed no longer to care about anything except victory. The Indian felt slighted. Australia's leaders are accountable. It is one of the laws of the game.

My job was to provide an individual response to events. I felt empty and tried to examine an apparently contrarian response. I did not expect the column to be popular. Deadlines meant that it was sent before Anil Kumble's enraged news conference. Later colleagues rang to say the news conferences had been testy and expressing concern about relations between the two press corps. What price relations between the teams?

Next day past players rang to express sorrow about the events. Sources revealed the angst in the Indian camp and confirmed they were closer to going home than anyone imagined. And the senior players were the most enraged. Then a call came from a woman with the Order of Australia complaining about the profanities used in front of children by a withdrawing Australian batsman, part of the leadership team. Relations between two beloved countries were breaking down and the home players either did not know or did

not care. Sections of the Australian sporting community were rejecting their own side and the players did not seem to understand.

Time to shake the tree. Sacking the captain was the only story remotely dramatic enough to bring everything out into the open. And so the article was written. It had almost been sent earlier in the match but a fever had taken hold and the thought occurred that mood might have been affected. But the point was valid. The leadership had failed.

And so the debate began. And so Australia set about reclaiming its cricket team. Of course the players were angry, even shocked. Some of the column was too forceful. The comparison with wild dogs was unfair. Just that I have six dogs in Africa, likeable canines until they form a hunting pack. The reaction was startling, phones ringing, offers of money to go on television, threats, compliments. But the journalist is not the story. A nerve had been touched and the important matters were going to be addressed.

Can the tour be saved? Can Ponting take the team to India in October? The next few days will decide. Australia must take the initiative. Ponting could contact his counterpart to suggest drawing a line in the sand. Forget about Sydney and all its fevers. Without prejudice withdraw all charges against Harbhajan and Brad Hogg Arrange to meet at stumps every day to sort out differences. Work out a common practice about walking, low catches, words and so forth. Kumble is a straight-shooter but also as fierce a patriot as his counterpart.

Perth and Adelaide can still be fun but it is going to take a lot of effort from all concerned. It was not the article that caused the problem but the conduct therein described. Ponting must produce a team that reflects the entire nation, not merely its cricket community, a team that plays with grace and without recrimination. He has some men eager to respond, Lee, Stuart Clark, Adam Gilchrist. Of course the same applies to the Indians.

One player rose above it all. His name is Ishant Sharma and he served his family and nation proud by regularly running across at stumps to congratulate opponents for their batting, and never mind that he had been robbed of their wickets earlier in the day. He is 20 and his dad sells air-conditioners

(Revered cricket columnist Peter Roebuck wrote this piece for Sydney Morning Herald website).

Seven players share lead in chess

SPORTS REPORTER

28th National Sub-junior Chess Championship after the end of the third round at the Chess Federation hall-room yesterday.

Abdullah Al Saif, Ekramul Haque Siam, Arifa Khatun Moni, Ashrafuzzaman, Nazmus Shakib, Shahidul Alam Abir and Saad Mohammed Junaid all won their respective matches to stay level on three points.

Lara writes

FROM PAGE 17

about that right now. I think it's important that I'm here to play for Trinidad and Tobago." He added that while he did not miss playing for West Indies, he was "happy getting up at 3.30 in the morning watching the guys." Lara said he was willing to play

regional cricket for Trinidad and Tobago for the moment but was ready to step aside later in the season, when the international players return, to give younger players a chance to shine.

skipper REUTERS, Karachi Zimbabwe have named off-spinner Saturday to play a four-day game

Eves warming

up well for

UNB, Dhaka

int'l kabaddi

Jatrabari KC earned their second

win in the EXIM Bank Women's

Kabaddi League defeating Matuail

Milon Smriti Sangsad 58-38 with

four lonas at the Outer Stadium

In the day's other match, Jurain

Meanwhile, there was good

news for the eve kabaddikas as an

international women's kabaddi

tournament will be organised by

Bangladesh Kabaddi Federation in

Apart from hosts Bangladesh, four

teams from India -- Mumbai/Jaipur,

Kolkata, Hyderabad, Assam -- along

with Japan are expected to take part in

the tournament, informed a Kabaddi

He said Japan and three teams

from India -- Kolkata, Hyderabad

and Assam -- have already con-

firmed their participation.

Utseya stays

Janata Club made a good start in

the league beating Victoria Club

kabaddi court yesterday.

42-33 with three lonas.

the city this March.

Federation official.

Prosper Utseya as captain for their Pakistan tour. Zimbabwe arrive in Pakistan on

and five one-day internationals. Zimbabwe's 15-member squad includes recalled players Ray Price and Gary Brent, according to the touring squad list submitted to the Pakistan Cricket Board.

Zimbabwe play five one-dayers from Jan. 21 to Feb. 2 in Karachi Hyderabad, Multan, Faisalabad and Sheikhupura.

SQUAD

Vusimusi Sibanda, Hamilton Mazakadsa, Justice Chibhabha, Tatenda Taibu, Brendon Taylor, Stuart Matsikenyeri, Keith Dabengwa, Elton Chigumbura, Prosper Utseya (captain), Gary Brent, Ray Price, Christopher Mpofu, Tawanda Mupariwa, Sean Williams, Timycen Maruma.

Patient Tait to wait for recall

CRICINFO, undated

Shaun Tait is trying not to get his hopes up of playing his third Test despite growing speculation that he will be included as a fourth fast bowler in Perth next week. Much was made of Australia going for a pace quartet in the series opener at the MCG but it didn't materialise and Mitchell Johnson got the nod ahead of him for the third fast-bowling spot.

Tait's chances of playing in the third Test, however, are deemed to be greater than they were in the first Test, given the pace of a lightning WACA surface. Tait himself was playing down the talk as he was facing the prospect of carrying the drinks once more after being named in the 12 for the third Test in a row. "It's pretty hard to change a

winning team, so we will see what happens," Tait said on Thursday evening, hinting that the selectors may prefer Brad Hogg as they aim for a record-breaking 17 Test wins on the spin after retaining the Border-Gavaskar Trophy with a 122-run win at the SCG on Sunday.

"I think there's a lot being talked about, but that's all it is, it's just talk. The team will be announced the morning of the game so I know as much as anyone else till then."

One big factor in his favour is his form. Following a handy showing against New Zealand in the limitedovers matches before Christmas, he has continued to impress in the Twenty20 competition and was quick again on Thursday evening as South Australia lost narrowly to Victoria in Adelaide.

Bayern appoint

FROM PAGE 19

But he returned to the football fold last year when he accepted a job as a match analyst for German television. In an illustrious career as a

prolific striker, Klinsmann played for Bayern between 1995 and 1997, winning the German league title and UEFA Cup, and also starred for Stuttgart, Inter Milan, Monaco and lottennam.

World Cup in 1990 when they beat Argentina 1-0 in the final in Rome and spearheaded their victory at the 1996 European Championships in England. The Bundesliga is currently on a

winter break and matches do not resume until February 1.

Chelsea rope FROM PAGE 19

Nations, while Andriy Shevchenko has an ankle injury.

vear deal with Bolton in August after joining for a club record of eight million pounds from Turkish club Fenerbahce, has scored 11 goals in 22 games this season.

The 28-year-old has also played for Arsenal, Liverpool and League while at Real Madrid.

Pawar's ultimate power

Cricket

CRICINFO, undated

Sharad Pawar, the BCCI president, has been handed the power to order India home from Australia without consulting the rest of the board. Although India are continuing their Test tour for now, Pawar said he would not be afraid to use the authority if India felt the result of the appeal into Harbhajan Singh's three-Test suspension was

not satisfactory. "I will only use the power in support of Harbhajan for the rest of the country," Pawar told the Herald Sun. "There will be a [ICC] committee hearing. We are confident in the hearing he will be cleared.

"Let's just see what happens, but allegations of racism against a member of our cricket team is not Pawar a text message assuring him charged under section 3.3. If Hogg acceptable. After the meeting, we then will take action. We fight against racism. Our country sup- unless the ban is lifted. It is unclear similar suspension to Harbhajan.

ported anti-racism movements in when the appeal will be held, South Africa.

There were concerns that India would withdraw from the Perth Test, which starts on Wednesday, if Harbhajan's appeal was not heard agreed to play on until the case was Australia's Brad Hogg, who will face completed, which may yet be after

participation in the ODI tri-series, which also features Australia and Sri Lanka, as India's players are still ICC Code of Conduct - the same Harbhajan. The spinner was sus-Symonds a monkey during the Sachin Tendulkar, who was batting with Harbhajan at the time, believes nothing racist was said.

of Harbhajan's innocence and was found guilty of a lesser offence of suggesting they should not play

although the New Zealand High Court judge John Hansen has been appointed as the commissioner for the hearing.

The other charge to come out of before the match. However, India the Sydney Test was against a hearing after he allegedly referred the final Test in Adelaide later this to Anil Kumble and MS Dhoni as "bastards" during the match. The But doubts remain over India's Daily Telegraph reported that Australia will argue the Hogg case should not fit in section 3.3 of the angry with the treatment of section under which Harbhajan was suspended - because they pended for calling Andrew believe the term "bastard" does not vilify a player on the basis of race, eventful Sydney Test, although religion, gender, colour, descent, or national or ethnic origin.

Instead, Australia will argue the term refers to a person's lineage and Tendulkar reportedly sent therefore Hogg should not be abusive language he would not face a

We aren't wrong

Cricket

AFP, Sydney

Australian opening pair Phil Jaques and Matthew Hayden on Friday defended the aggressive approach of the world champions to their cricket following last week's controversial Sydney Test.

The Australians have since been widely criticised for displaying poor sportsmanship during the match, including Andrew Symonds failing to walk when he should have been given out, Ricky Ponting and Michael Clarke claiming doubtful catches, and the appeal that led to the erroneous Rahul Dravid dismissal.

Ponting's captaincy was also criticised and there were calls for him to be sacked. However, Jaques said he was comfortable with what happened.

"If I thought there was something that was untoward in the way

we play the game or if anything was said that crossed the line, I for one happened over the last couple of would have said something," he weeks but we're still two very good said. "I'm sure the other guys cricket teams out to win the series would have said something as well. I think we play the game in the right spirit. We play the game hard, but we play the game fair."

series, the batsman said he doubted the team would alter their approach, adding: "I don't think there's been too much wrong with the way we play cricket.

"I don't think the recent events on," he said. warrant us drastically changing the way we play the game. They're entitled to their opinion, but we know the way we play and in our hearts we play as fairly as we can." Although the Indians have threat-

ened to cancel their tour pending the result of Harbhajan Singh's appeal against a three-Test ban for allegedly racially abusing Symonds, Jaques said he was confident the teams could put aside their differences.

"Obviously a few things have and I'm sure it'll be played in the right spirit," he said.

Jaques was disappointed some of the gloss had been taken off With two Tests remaining in the Australia's 16th straight Test win to retain the Border-Gavaskar Trophy. "It's been a bit of a shame this week because it was such a great Test match in Sydney and I think that was lost in all the stuff that has gone

Meanwhile, Hayden said emotion was an important part of cricket. "When I finish cricket I don't want to have to be in a game where

everything is robots and robotic," he said. "I want to see Ricky Ponting going like that when he wins and plays for Australia.

"That's the heat of the battle, that's Test cricket, that's the enormous passion and enthusiasm... you see it even in backyard cricket."

Henin wins classic final

the Sydney International on Friday.

Tennis

AFP, Sydney

The tenacious Belgian fought back from dropping the opening set to down her closest ranking rival, the second-seeded Russian, 4-6, 6-2, 6-4 in 2 hours 18 minutes.

It was Henin's third Sydney title, having won here previously against Amelie Mauresmo in 2004 and Francesca Schiavone in 2006, and

Henin's last defeat was her shocksemifinal loss to Frenchwoman Marion Bartoli at Wimbledon back The win, coming just days before

matches.

stretched her winning streak to 28

Melbourne, also extended Henin's advantage over Kuznetsova to 16-2 in career match-ups. Henin has now won all her six

the start of the Australian Open in

WTA finals against the world number two. "It was perfect preparation for the Open. I was starting to feel much

better today and she really pushed me to my limits," Henin said. "It was good to see how I dealt with the nerves tonight because I was in a pretty bad situation in the third set but I remained very calm and I played my best tennis when I

was under pressure." Kuznetsova only saw positives out of defeat to the world number

she said.

Henin's victory came despite struggling on her serve with nine double-faults and three service breaks.

But she rose to Kuznetsova's challenge and played her best tennis deep in the final set, breaking the Russian's serve twice to surge home.

Henin was hesitant on her serve and was broken in the fourth game of the opening set but hit back, breaking Kuznetsova to love in the

The top seed again had trouble on serve and a double-fault brought up two set points.

She saved one with a rasping crossopeningset in 42 minutes.

opening game of the second set and again in the seventh game,

under pressure in the final set, dropping her opening service game to love and having a fight to hold on to her next one.

But she broke Kuznetsova to love in the fifth game and hit some great forehands to level at 3-3. Henin fought off two break

game before breaking Kuznetsova with a terrific low forehand. She served out for the match,

League minus

though club-mate and Bafana Bafana captain Aaron Mokoena McCarthy scored 24 goals in all

and Mokoena said: "Benni is one of the toughest strikers in the country."

Pakistan seeks Oval reversal

Cricket

AFP, Karachi

Pakistan has officially asked cricket's governing body to change the result of the Oval Test that was awarded to England on forfeit two years ago, officials said Friday.

"The matter was raised at the ICC executive committee meeting last year and has been passed to the ICC (International Cricket Council) cricket committee, which will take the matter up in its meeting in May this year," a senior Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) official, who chose not to be named, told AFP.

The fourth and final Test of the from the Indian board and press for series played in August 2006 was awarded to England after Pakistan captain Inzamamul Haq refused to ball tampering charges and it was take the field following allegations due to those allegations that we of ball-tampering against his team. Pakistan blamed Australian

and campaigned for his removal

in international matches. had made the application last year the next Test in Perth.

and wanted the result changed to abandoned or drawn. "We have made the application

to the ICC and hope for a favourable result at the next cricket com mittee meeting," the official said. He said England supported Pakistan's case when it was dis-

cussed at the executive board meeting of the ICC last year. "We have moved the application on the basis of the ICC dropping the ball-tampering charges against our team," he said.

Inzamam, who retired from international cricket last year, recently urged the PCB to press for the result change. "Pakistan should take the lead

the reversal of the Oval Test forfeit

because Pakistan was cleared of the

refused to play," Inzamam was

quoted as saying in the Pakistani umpire Darrell Hair for the fiasco mediathis week. He was referring to India's from the ICC Elite Panel of umpires. complaints about the performance The ICC later stopped posting Hair of veteran West Indian umpire Steve Bucknor in the Sydney Test The PCB official said Pakistan last week, which saw him axed for

to have any regrets at all. "I don't think you should think

Seven players shared the lead in the

He helped Germany win the

Anelka, who signed a new four-

Manchester City in the Premier League and won the Champions

World number one Justine Henin captured her 40th career title and strengthened her Australian Open claims with a quality three-set victory over Svetlana Kuznetsova at



World number one Justine Henin of Belgium holds the trophy after winning the final against Svetlana Kuznetsova of Russia at the Sydney International

Ponting didn't want

not just accusing a cricketer, but the ramifications of this accusation, unproven in the eyes of mostly everyone, were bound to be huge. After all, India's cricketers

are also the country's ambassadors

and by making such serious

charges, without proof, it becomes

tournament on Friday.

FROM PAGE 17

a question of honour. There is obviously a sense of outrage in the country. I cannot comment on what I thought of the proceedings, but the fact that we have appealed should make things self-evident. I'm really grateful for the overwhelming support the team has received from Indians in India and abroad, and from people from other parts of the world, equally upset by the turn of events.

They have backed us right through and are doing all they can to make sure the players will be okay. We're going to try and do our

I'm also really thankful to the

BCCI for their unstinting support.

best in Perth, a place where no one

enforce a draw in Sydney. We had a great opportunity when Hussey and Hayden were batting, to try and restrict their second innings score, but Hussey batted really well to put the game beyond us. Still, we should have at least tried for a draw despite that. We

really need to get our batting in

order. Too often, of late, we've

struggled batting in our second

innings to save a game. Here, we

were three down at tea and then

expects anything much from us. We

are disappointed that we couldn't

Finally, it's important that the game goes on. Cricket is larger than any individual. One of the reasons I have tried to put the game and other things in perspective is to ensure that we move on and play good cricket. I'll do my best but it takes two to tango and ensure things move smoothly. I can only hope it happens.

lost seven in a row.

(Indian captain Anil Kumble wrote this article for Hindustan Times website).

"This is the best year I've started so far, but it's only the first tournament. I'm really happy about being in the final and playing Justine,"

seventh game.

court forehand volley but then netted a backhand to hand the Russian the Henin hit back straight away, breaking the second seed in the

levelling the final after 80 minutes. Henin's service again came

points on her service in the eighth

winning when Kuznetsova's forehand went long.

Africa striker Benni McCarthy available for their match with Bolton even

believes he should be in Ghana. competitions for Rovers last season