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Arambagh in final

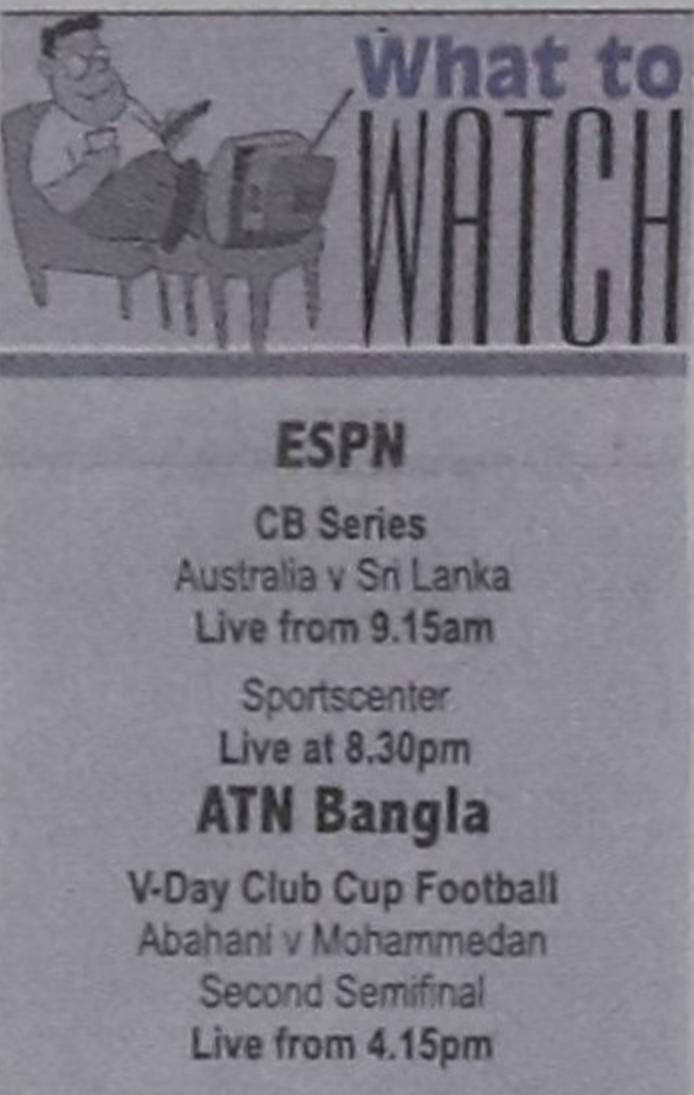


Did U Know?

Opener Shahriar Nafees has the highest total in a single one-day series for a Bangladeshi, with 274 runs against Zimbabwe in 2006-07.



Adam Gilchrist
(Australian wicketkeeper-batsman)
"Inou know what Sachin Tendulkar feels every time he bats in India."
While batting in his final Twenty20 match in front of a packed Melbourne Cricket Ground



DAY'S EVENT
V-Day Club Cup Football
Abahani v Mohammadan (4.15pm)
Second Semifinal
Venue: Bangabandhu National Stadium

SR DIV SOCCER
Both matches drawn

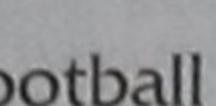
SPORTS REPORTER

Youngmen's Club failed to repeat their performance of a 3-0 win against Victoria two days earlier in the Victory Day Club Cup when the two sides drew 1-1 in yesterday's Senior Division Football League.

Worhidul Alam Sabuj put Youngmen's ahead one minute before half-time but second-placed Victoria equalised through Arafat in the 70th minute at the Birsreshtha Shaheed Mostafa Kamal Stadium in Kamalapur as the 13-team competition resumed after a three-day break.

The other match between Dhaka Wanderers and City Club ended in a goalless draw. There will be no match today.

After seven rounds, Victoria reached 15 points, trailing leaders Jatrabari by three points. Youngmen's were on 11 points from six games while Wanderers and bottom-table City on nine and two points respectively.



Football

SPORTS REPORTER

A late rally steered Arambagh Krira Sangha to end Badda Jagarani's impressive run in the Protiti Pharma Victory Day Club Cup football tournament and enter the final with a 2-0 win in the first semifinal yesterday.

Guest midfielder Rezaul Karim Liton and Ugandan striker Iddi Badambuze scored inside the last ten minutes at the almost empty Bangabandhu National Stadium as Arambagh set a final date on February 10 against winners of today's semifinal between Abahani and Mohammedan.

It would be Arambagh's third final of a major tournament after reaching the Federation Cup finals in 1996 and 2000 although they had lost on both occasions.

Senior Division side Badda, who began the eight-team event with a stunning 1-0 win over Abahani, stormed to the last four as Group B champions when they thrashed Dhaka Wanderers 4-1 even after a 2-1 defeat at the hands of Mukujoddain in the group stage.

The Badda youngsters, however, showed their nerves against professional league club Arambagh in the knockout stage.

With skipper and former national midfielder Mintu missing out due to injury, they heavily missed the touch of experience and survived a close call after 21 minutes.

Arambagh's outstanding performer Liton, a former international from Brothers Union who has been playing as a guest, took a superb corner but defender and

captain Akram's brilliant header was cleared by another header by Russell Jr from the goalline.

Badda should have clinched the lead after 43 minutes but stand-in captain Nasir, who has been included in the national Under-19 squad for this month's Indo-Bangladesh Bangla Games, fluffed a sitter in the 43rd minute. He had rival keeper Piru on one-on-one after a corner but the midfielder

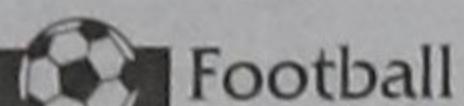
shot the ball over the bar near from the penalty spot.

With both sides failing to break the deadlock at the break, Liton provided another chance 13 minutes after resumption but his chip from the left was headed out of danger before the two African forwards could meet the ball.

Arambagh fullback Monu, who

SEE PAGE 22 COL 1

A final before final



Football

SPORTS REPORTER

Mohammedan Sporting Club will look forward to rebuild a tarnished image following an 'unsporting' game against Arambagh in the group stage and the punishment they had received for it when they face archrivals Abahani in the second semifinal of the Protiti Pharma Victory Day Club Cup today.

Manik, who has been using about five guest players, admitted his side will start as dark horse against an informed Abahani.

"We didn't have adequate preparation and there is little understanding among the players. Still, Abahani -- who have shown superb team work so far -- can be beaten if our players use their senses," the former national fullback added.

After resting half a dozen regulars against Arambagh, Manik will have all his booters available against the sky-blues, who will miss key striker Emily and attacking midfielder Abul.

The tournament committee, however, forfeited Mohammedan's 3-1 win and fined Tk 50,000 each to both teams for 'hurting the spirit of the game'.

"I don't think the dispute surrounding Tuesday's match will influence my team tomorrow as they don't want to look back. All the players' focus is on the semifinal," black and whites coach Shafiqul Islam Manik said yesterday.

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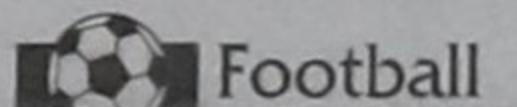
After resting half a dozen regulars against Arambagh, Manik will have all his booters available against the sky-blues, who will miss key striker Emily and attacking midfielder Abul.

SEE PAGE 22 COL 4



PHOTO: STAR
Arambagh players celebrate their triumph over Badda Jagarani in the first semifinal of the Protiti Pharma Victory Day Club Cup football tournament at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday. They will take on the winners of today's semifinal between bitter-rivals Mohammedan and Abahani in Sunday's final.

Italy, Germany cruise



Football

AFP, Paris

Fabio Capello oversaw a winning start to his tenure as England manager on Wednesday with a 2-1 victory over Switzerland while his Italian compatriots scored an impressive friendly success over Portugal which augurs well for the Azzuri's chances at Euro 2008.

Despite England's abject failure to qualify for the European Championships in June their first game under Capello was always going to merit more than a Wembley sideshow and a healthy crowd was warmed by fine goals from Jermaine Jenas and Shaun Wright-Phillips.

In between times, however, the deficiencies of the Steve McClaren era were apparent at the back as Eren Dediok stole in to notch a fine Swiss consolation.

From the team that started England's last match, a 3-2 Wembley defeat by Croatia Steve McClaren a place at Euro 2008 and his job, only Steven Gerrard, Gareth Barry and Joe Cole survived with off-form Newcastle striker Michael Owen dropped.

David Bentley shone in the space vacated by David Beckham on the right of midfield while veteran keeper David James returned just six months short of his 38th birthday and was in no way at fault for Dediok's goal.

But England will have to kick their heels in June as the cream of the European game heads for Austria and Switzerland where Italy will be on short odds to add the trophy to their World Cup triumph of 2006 after swatting Portugal 3-1 in Zurich.

Bayern Munich forward Luca Toni opened the scoring in first-half injury-time and AC Milan midfielder Andrea Pirlo doubled the advantage six minutes after the break with a bobbling shot from distance.

Ricardo Quaresma pulled a goal back with less than a quarter of an hour to play but two minutes later Udinese forward Fabio Quagliarella sealed the victory against a Portuguese side whose defending bordered on the chaotic.

"That was a great performance," SEE PAGE 22 COL 2



PHOTO: INTERNET
Italy striker Luca Toni embarks on his trademark celebration after scoring the opening goal in their friendly match against Portugal at the Letzigrund Stadium in Zurich on Wednesday.

Meeting draws no decision

SPORTS REPORTER

The executive committee of Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) on Wednesday failed to make any headway over some serious issues.

The committee was supposed to take a final decision on the appointment of a new CEO, but nothing came of it. The board decided to invite fresh aspirants as well as the shortlisted candidates for a replacement of Mahmudur Rahman, whose contract expires this month.

Administration DGM Nizamuddin Chowdhury meanwhile, has been posted as the acting chief executive officer.

The most burning issue regarding the long-term television deal was also discussed in the meeting.

The meeting has asked the M Abdul Monem-led review committee to re-examine Nimbus's reply, which was received on Tuesday regarding the three-day meeting they had with the BCB review committee last month.

In regards to the team operations manager, BCB has asked for fresh applicants.

Weather still a factor

Lankans take on hosts today

CRICINFO, Sydney

There have been some brutal individual efforts in those victories, especially by Sanath Jayasuriya, whose past five ODI innings at the SCG have brought 65, 122, 106, 114 and a duck in their most recent loss there. His aim of scoring a fourth century at the ground might be hampered by the weather, however, with the showers that drifted through Sydney on Thursday likely to continue on Friday.

Both teams hope the conditions are fine enough to cobble together a result, having each opened their CB Series campaigns with a washout against India in Brisbane. "It's probably been frustrating for all three teams I suppose," Australia's captain Ricky Ponting said. "Brisbane, the weather up there last week was horrendous and it hasn't been much better this week. Our preparation has been a little bit different this week than we probably would have liked."

Sydney spectators have witnessed some superb cricket from Sri Lanka over the years, although they have never played a Test there. They like the ground so much they have won four of their last five ODIs at the venue. "Maybe that's why they don't let us play Test cricket here," Mahela Jayawardene, Sri Lanka's captain, said jokingly ahead of the third CB Series game.

Adelaide Test against India late last month. Ponting conceded he should have retired hurt rather than batting on in the Test, although he is now confident of making it through the whole CB Series.

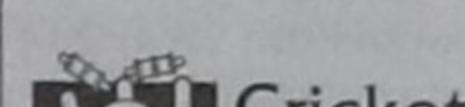
"I must admit I battled through (Sunday's) game in Brisbane," he said. "I had a lot of work over the last few days here but today (Thursday) I purposely had a really long hit-out in the nets out the back just to get a bit more confidence in my movements and try and iron out a bit of the stiffness that I've got."

Ponting's soreness has not helped his fielding and he was one of the culprits in the first ODI when two catches went down in the slips. There were several uncharacteristic misses from Ponting's teammates in the field during the Test series and he said the trend was starting to worry him.

"The catching is a concern," Ponting said. "We've had guys moving all over the place in the

SEE PAGE 22 COL 2

England stay superior



Cricket

AFP, Christchurch

England again outclassed New Zealand when Paul Collingwood and Owais Shah reversed a batting slump to engineer a 50-run win in their Twenty20 match here Thursday.

England posted 193 for eight and a demoralised New Zealand could only manage 143 for eight in reply.

The win wrapped up the festive section of the tour for England 2-0, giving them a psychological edge as they head into a series of five one-day matches starting on Saturday followed by three Tests next month.

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But the second Twenty20 victory was not as clinical as the first encounter when England bat the same team and most batsmen contributed to their 32-run victory

47 including four fours and two sixes.

Both fell in consecutive balls from Paul Hitchcock -- Shah caught at deep long off and Collingwood at deep long on, bringing in the powerful Dmitri Mascarenhas who avoided the hat-trick with a six.

Collingwood rated the England performance better than in the first match because of the way they recovered.

"We lost four quick wickets in the middle but we got the momentum back and that was important and the boys carried it on through the innings and that was a massive total," he said.

"There's so many positives that have come out of it and hopefully we can take that kind of form into the one-day series. We've got five very important games coming up and we can take a lot of confidence from these two wins."

A dejected New Zealand captain

SEE PAGE 22 COL 5



PHOTO: AFP
England skipper Paul Collingwood executes a pull shot on way to a blistering fifty during the second Twenty20 match against New Zealand at Lancaster Park in Christchurch yesterday.

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