

Isinbayeva sets new pole vault world mark

AFP, Donetsk

Olympic champion Yelena Isinbayeva of Russia set a new world indoor record in the women's pole vault here on Saturday as she cleared the mark of four metres 95 centimetres.

Her vault beat the previous mark of 4.93m which she set last year at the same venue.

This was the third consecutive year in which 25-year-old Isinbayeva, who has leaped 5.02 outdoors, broke the indoor mark in Donetsk.

"I'm very happy to start an Olympic season with a world record in my first competition," said Isinbayeva, who won in Donetsk for the fifth consecutive year.

In her first competition since October 3, Isinbayeva began her competition with first attempt clearances at 4.67m and 4.77m, the latter enough to seal the victory.

She need three tries at 4.87m, and after a pair of misses at 4.94m, she gambled and had the bar raised to 4.95m.

Russian Yuliya Golubchikova finished second with a 4.72 clearance, with Monica Pyrek of Poland third (4.67).

Wenger blames the pitch

INTERNET, undated

Arsenal boss Arsene Wenger labelled the Old Trafford pitch "a disgrace" in the wake of his side's FA Cup exit on Saturday.

Wenger was furious at the state of the playing surface which he felt hindered his side during the 4-0 fifth-round defeat.

"The groundsman had as bad a day as us," he said.

"You will see us in a different shape when we come back and a on different pitch."

"The pitch is a disgrace. You have players worth 20-25 million pounds and you cannot play a pass without it bouncing."

Wenger did concede the Gunners had been second best but he believes they can rediscover their form against AC Milan in the Champions League on Wednesday.

He said: "It is difficult to find any positives from the performance, apart from the fact we do not have any more injuries."

"Even before the sending off we never looked like we could come back."

"It was difficult. We did not seem to have the physical resources that were needed."

"We were not up to our level. We need to pick ourselves up quickly because we have a massive game on Wednesday and need to be at our best against Milan."

SL Pakistan's

FROM PAGE 17 the West Indies in April-May before a home series against India in July.

Australia are due to tour Pakistan for three Tests, five one-day internationals and a Twenty20 match in March-April.

But Australian cricket officials have told their Pakistani counterparts that they have received security advice against touring Pakistan because of political unrest and violence.

Australia have not toured Pakistan since 1998. They forced Pakistan to play at neutral venues in Sri Lanka and Sharjah in 2002, a year after the 9/11 attacks on the United States sparked security fears in South Asia.

Pakistan have ruled out playing the latest series at neutral venues or relocating it to Australia.

Maldini gets

FROM PAGE 20

He twice played in major finals but lost out on penalties to Brazil in the 1994 World Cup final and suffered an extra-time defeat at the hands of France in the 2000 European Championships final.

But there have been many more good days than bad in the more than 8,400 days since he made his first-team debut for Milan on January 20, 1985 at Udinese.

He certainly won't be adding another Serie A title to his collection this season, not with Milan 21 points behind leaders and bitter city rivals Inter, but he can still dream about lifting an unprecedented sixth Champions League crown in May.

That would be the perfect way to cap an amazing career.

Cup magic

FROM PAGE 20

out Premier League Birmingham in the third round, shocked the crowd just moments before half-time when Michael Collins struck from 12 yards.

Lampard then settled Chelsea's nerves in the 60th minute before Salomon Kalou put the result beyond doubt.

Rickie Lambert's deflected free-kick six minutes from time was good enough for Bristol Rovers to see off Southampton.



PHOTO: STAR

Poojashree Venkatesh of India serves against Zhao Di of China during the girls' singles final of the Dhaka Bank tennis championships at the National Tennis Complex in Ramna yesterday. The nearly six feet tall Indian teenager won the final 6-0, 5-7, 6-3 to complete a delightful double.

Locals pluck 8

FROM PAGE 17

all-rounder Shakib Al Hasan impressed many especially by his decision to bring in slow medium pacer Aftab Ahmed in attack when ball was keeping low suddenly, an hour after the tea session.

And Aftab didn't let his young skipper down by taking a return catch of South African vice-captain Ashwell Prince, who made 32 off 69 balls that featured two fours and as many sixes.

The BCB XI's hope of bundling out their opponents was dashed as Mark Boucher remained not out on 64 while Dale Steyn accompanied him with 19 runs.

SCOREBOARD

Scoreboard on the first day of the three-day warm-up match between visiting South Africa and Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) XI at the Fatullah Cricket Stadium yesterday:

SOUTH AFRICA: First innings

Smith lbw b Rasel	2			
Duminy c Rahim b Rasel	17			
Amla c Zunaed b Enamul	103			
Kallis c Forhad b Enamul	36			
Prince c b Aftab	32			
DeVilliers b Forhad	39			
Boucher not out	64			
Botha lbw b Forhad	0			
Morkel c Rahim b Forhad	0			
Steyn not out	19			
Extras: (b-4, nb-13)	17			
Total: (For 8 wks in 88 overs)	329			
To bat: Ntini, Nel.				
Fall of wickets: 1-5, 2-35, 3-159, 4-169, 5-227, 6-272, 7-272, 8-274.				
Bowler	O	M	R	W
Rasel	18	4	86	2
Sajidul	15	2	75	0
Forhad	17	5	52	3
Enamul	22	3	71	2
Shakib	11	3	20	0
Aftab	4	0	20	1
Rokibul	1	0	1	0

Toss: South Africa
Umpires: Mahfuzur Rahman and Nadir Shah

4th JFA Cup

FROM PAGE 17

Habiganj defeated Brahmanbaria 3-1 in the tie-breakers after a goalless draw at tiebreaker Moulvibazar while Gazipur eliminated Sherpur by 5-4 penalties after a 1-1 draw in regulation time.

Jhenaidah crushed Satkhira 3-0 with goals from Akhter, Shamim and Tareq at Khulna.

Our Manikganj correspondent adds: Faridpur ousted Rajbari 5-4 in the penalty shoot-out after a thrilling 3-3 draw at the opening zonal match here at the local stadium.

Murad opened the scoring for Faridpur after 17 minutes but Al Amin's early second half equaliser inspired Rajbari to cruise to a 3-1 lead by the hour. However, two-goal Hasibur Rahman levelled the score for Faridpur to take the match into penalties.

India's woeful batting

FROM PAGE 17

series to just 53 runs at 10.60 and his latest failure came just a couple of days after Gilchrist admitted the skipper was struggling with the burdens of a long and often controversial summer.

Andrew Symonds is another Australian batsman in the wars and he made just three before being caught by Robin Uthappa in gully from the bowling of Ishant Sharma, taking his tally for the series to just 38 runs at 9.50.

Australia were in deep trouble at 73 for five, but Clarke's innings got them back into the match and India's batsmen then blew the chance to make it successive wins over the home side.

SCOREBOARD

Scoreboard of the tri-series one-day match between Australia and India at the Adelaide Oval on Sunday:

AUSTRALIA

Gilchrist b I Sharma 15

Hayden c Dhoni b Pathan 13

Ponting c R Sharma b Patel 10

Clarke c Sharma b Pathan	79			
Symonds c Uthappa b I Sharma	3			
Hussey c Dhoni b Pathan	5			
Hopes st Dhoni b Harbhajan	19			
Hogg run out	19			
Johnson not out	32			
Bracken c Dhoni b Pathan	0			
Clark not out	8			
Extras: (lb-2, w-6, nb-2)	0			
Total: (For nine wks in 50 overs)	203			
Fall of wickets: 1-25, 2-41, 3-43, 4-50, 5-73, 6-112, 7-184, 8-187, 9-187.				
Bowler	O	M	R	W
Sreesanth	8	0	35	0
I Sharma	9	1	32	2
Patel	9	1	31	1
Pathan	10	1	41	4
Harbhajan	10	0	40	1
Yuvraj	4	0	22	0
INDIA				
Gambhir c Ponting b Johnson	34			
Tendulkar lbw b Bracken	43			
Pathan c Hayden b Hopes	14			
R Sharma c Gilchrist b Hopes	14			
Yuvraj c Clark b Hogg	20			
Dhoni run out	37			
Uthappa c Gilchrist b Johnson	18			
Harbhajan c Gilchrist b Johnson	44			
Sreesanth st Gilchrist b Hogg	1			

INDIA

Gambhir c Ponting b Johnson 34

Tendulkar lbw b Bracken 5

Pathan c Hayden b Hopes 14

R Sharma c Gilchrist b Hopes 1

Yuvraj c Clark b Hogg 26

Dhoni run out 37

Uthappa c Gilchrist b Johnson 18

Harbhajan c Gilchrist b Johnson 4

Sreesanth st Gilchrist b Hogg 1

It's Inter's to lose

FROM PAGE 20

turned a cross from Rodrigo Taddei onto his own post.

Roma coach Luciano Spalletti admitted his team had not risen to the occasion.

"We were slow in developing our quality and in understanding the flow of the game," he said. "We did not play our best."

Milan's point was enough for them to go fourth but Fiorentina can reclaim that place if they avoid defeat at home to Catania on Sunday.

Parma's Andrea Pisanu had the best chance of the first period but he completely missed a cross from the right with only Australian goalkeeper Zeljko Kalac to beat.

Even the introduction of Maldini on 68 minutes failed to

spark a subdued Milan into life.

Parma again should have taken the lead on 65 minutes as substitute Igor Budan was played in one-on-one with Kalac by a clever pass from Andrea Gasbarroni but the Australian saved the European champions.

It was Milan's second draw in a week but the good news for them ahead of Champions League duty on Wednesday was Arsenal's 4-0 capitulation against Manchester United in the FA Cup.

"We're fourth and that was our aim before the Champions League started again, even if Fiorentina have played one game less," said Milan coach Carlo Ancelotti.

"It was a surprising result (Arsenal). It's nice to see and we hope it will be the same on Wednesday."

Metz to sue

FROM PAGE 20

"Referees were given precise instructions before the beginning of the season both by FIFA and UEFA over how they should react if there were incidents of racist abuse."

"They were given plenty of options, even to the extent of taking the players off."

"It (the behaviour of the referee) is precisely the question I would like to put but until we receive the referee's report I cannot make a comment or a judgement."

"It is not an easy decision to take (taking the players off or abandoning the match)."

"I will wait for the referee's report and that of the league delegate who was there and the League Committee will study both of them on Thursday."

Poojashree's double crown

SPORTS REPORTER

Poojashree Venkatesh of India lifted double crown in the Dhaka Bank 22nd Bangladesh International Junior Tennis Championships yesterday when she won both the girls' singles and doubles titles.

Poojashree recorded a hard-fought 6-0, 5-7, 6-3 win in the singles final against China's Zhao Di before winning the doubles final pairing with Malaysian Noordin against British duo Whybourne and Sian 6-0, 7-5 at the National Tennis Complex in Ramna.

Bangladesh will feature in the boys' doubles final today as local boy Ranjan Ram and Taipei's Lin eliminated Indonesian pair Sonny and Hutaeruk 6-4, 6-4 in the semi-finals yesterday.

They will face Indian pair Manuja and Ahuja, who got walk-over against semifinalists McColloch of Britain and Georgia's Sergi, in the afternoon.

The boys' singles final between Ronak Manuja of India and Chen I-Ta of Taipei will be played this morning.

Captain defends

FROM PAGE 17

he should not have been included in the side.

Furious with the pacer's sluggish fielding, the former India captain said he had no problems with Munaf as a bowler but felt the pacer could neither really bat, nor did he give his best in the field.

In such a situation, leg-spinner Piyush Chawla or all-rounder Praveen Kumar, who can bat a bit, would have been a better choice as the fourth bowler, Gavaskar said.

"If he is among the three regular bowlers, it's okay but Munaf does not deserve a place as the fourth bowler. Because he cannot bat, he is useless as a fielder and in one-day cricket you need to do well in at least two aspects," Gavaskar said.

LOCAL SNIPPETS

FROM PAGE 17

School Cricket Championship here yesterday.

Having scored 164 all out, Shahabullah School restricted their opposition to 80 runs. Shaown top-scored with 40 for the winners.

POLICE TENNIS

Narayanganj correspondent: Shahjahan Raj clinched the men's singles title in the Police Super Cup tennis tournament defeating Sohrab Hossain in yesterday's final at the local Police Tennis court. The doubles title went to Sajjad Ali and Sohrab Hossain who defeated Selim-Towfiq pair.

Rector of Police Staff College AKM Mahfuzul Haque distributed trophies among the winners.

Murali averts

FROM PAGE 17

available almost immediately.

"It took me about 10 minutes to get to St Vincent's by car and Muralidaran was getting there as I arrived," he said.

At the hospital, Foltyn repositioned the tooth and splinted it but did not give any drugs to the player for that would have forced the player sit out of the remainder of the match.

Muralidaran eventually returned to ground and hit a six as well before getting out.

"He struck me as a very polite and humble person," Foltyn said. "We watched light-heartedly, but obviously he was there for a reason."

Mohammedan

FROM PAGE 17

when they snatched a three-wicket win over BKSP (146-9) with three balls remaining at the Dhanmondi Cricket Stadium.

In Group-B, Surjo Torun and Victoria Sporting Club shared lead with maximum six points by maintaining their winning spree.

Shamsur Rahman struck an unbeaten 50 off 43 balls in Torun's seven-wicket victory as they reached 108-3 in reply to Sonargaon Cricketers' paltry 107 all out at the BKSP.

Victoria downed Partex by six wickets in a high scoring afternoon match at the DCS, thank to Ehsanul Haq's season's best.

Victoria skipper Ehsanul, who came to the wicket with his side reeling at 10-2 while chasing Partex's 152-7, smashed ten fours and one six in his 82 off 48 balls to lead his side to 154-4 with eight deliveries to spare.

Last year's losing finalists Old DOHS bounced back after the opening round loss to Surjo Torun when the two-time Premierships champions inflicted a heavy 50-run defeat on all-losers Young Pegasus at BKSP.

Opener and captain Mehrab Hossain remained 63 not out in DOHS's moderate 129-5 in 20 overs before his side put on a tight bowling display to restrict the opposition to 76-7.

Rashedur, Munir and Mahbub each chipped in two wickets while Premiership debutant Mohammad Isam bagged 1-17 from four overs with his left-arm spin.

I'm in a bit of a rut: Ricky

JENNY THOMPSON



PHOTO: AFP

Captain Ricky Ponting has brushed aside suggestions that off-field distractions centring on Australian participation in the Indian

Premier League (IPL) has led to his current slump in form.

Ponting has been vocally supporting the move and wants Cricket Australia to allow its contracted players to appear in the tournament, but he does not believe that such matters, which also include the in-doubt tour of Pakistan, are impacting his performance.

Ponting made 10 in Adelaide against India on Sunday and averages 10.60 in five matches of this year's CB Series. "I'm in a little bit of a bad run at the moment but it's not because I've got other things on my mind," Ponting said. "You have your ups and downs and I'm in a bit of a rut, but I'm working hard so hopefully the runs will start to come in the next couple of games."

He however was unimpressed by his team's batting and was sure the World Cup champions could improve greatly on their recent form.

"We are not batting very well, but

we are doing enough to win some games," he said.

"Once again tonight our bowlers held us up and we were pretty sharp in the field and came away with a bonus point win."

"We haven't played our best cricket yet, but we are still on top of the table and are winning games of cricket, which is a good sign."

He admitted it was hard to tell the batsmen to knuckle down given his own form but did so in a meeting before the game. Yet while Michael Clarke made the sole fifty, Ponting could only attribute the collective dip to coincidence. "It's really unusual for our team to have two or three of those guys (batsmen) in a slump but we're not that concerned about it because we are winning games. If those sorts of things on our minds it would be affecting the whole team. Right at the moment the bowlers have just been a bit too good for the batsmen."

On top of the IPL distractions Ponting, like his other teammates, also has sponsorship obligations but he denied that these commitments encroached on his game. In fact, he argued that they had almost helped in the IPL case, as he is used to separating money matters from batting business. "That's been one of my strengths over the years. When

it's cricket time, it's cricket time."

One player with no such concerns having announced his international retirement is Adam Gilchrist. On Sunday night he may have scored 15 (albeit on the back of a century at the WACA on Friday) but having quit, his wicketkeeping was freer than ever and he took four catches and an stump.

"If he keeps doing what he's done in the last couple of weeks I'm happy for him to keep going on a little bit longer," Ponting said with a smile, and later even compared Gilchrist to Glenn McGrath in the 2007 World Cup, where the bowler ended up as player of the tournament in his farewell ODI series.

"He (McGrath) felt that all the worry was gone. He just wanted to enjoy every game for what it was and Gilly is feeling a little bit the same now, just really enjoying his cricket and that's showing through."

Australia may not be playing their best cricket but Ponting finds it satisfying that they are still winning games. What also pleases them is their four days off to rest and recover - Brett Lee included after he missed this game to recharge - before their next match against Sri Lanka on Friday.

(The author is an assistant editor at Cricinfo)

Favourites' fine start

FROM PAGE 17

reply in Group B in Kuala Lumpur.

Tanmay Srivastava led India's charge with an unbeaten 83 after openers Taruwar Kohli (40) and Shreevats Goswami (58) had laid a solid platform with a first-wicket stand of 100 by the 22nd over.

Papua New Guinea, who do not have a turf wicket at home, fought hard to reach 81-5 before India grabbed the next five wickets for four runs.

Left-arm spinner Iqbal Abdullah claimed 3-2 in three overs while Pardeep Sangwan, Ajitesh Argal and skipper Virat Kohli took two wickets each.

Australian captain Michael Hill smashed seven boundaries and 12 sixes in a blistering 124 off 71 balls that lifted his team to 312 all out against Namibia in Group C in Penang.

The Aussies, who were comfortably placed at 276-4 in the 40th over, lost the last six wickets for 36 runs with Ya France and Ashley van Rooi claiming three wickets each.

The total, however, proved too much for the inexperienced Namibians, who were bowled out for 163 with Steven Smith finishing with four wickets.

England, meanwhile, dismissed Ireland for 109 in a group D match in Kuala Lumpur with Steven Finn claiming 3-21 and James Harris 3-40.

England openers James Taylor (52) and Billy Godleman (38) surpassed the target in the 16th over to make an impressive start in the tournament.

The Junior World Cup features the 10 regular cricket nations - Australia, England, India, Pakistan, West Indies, Sri Lanka, South Africa, New Zealand, Bangladesh and Zimbabwe - plus five qualifiers and the hosts.

The regional qualifiers are Namibia (Africa), Nepal (Asia), Papua New Guinea (East Asia-Pacific), Ireland (Europe) and Bermuda (Americas).

The 16 teams are divided into four groups with the top two qualifying for the quarterfinals.

The final will be played at the Kinrara Oval here on March 2.

In today's matches, Bangladesh take on Bermuda, Sri Lanka face Nepal, West Indies face off with South Africa and New Zealand meet Zimbabwe.

SCORES IN BRIEF

Scores from the opening day's matches of the ICC Under-19 World Cup on Sunday:

Group A

MALAYSIA: 75 all out in 24.4 overs (Azril 28; Raza 6-29, Aamer 3-11)

PAKISTAN: 76-2 in 9.3 overs (Shahzad 27 not out, Amin 31)

Result: Pakistan beat Malaysia by eight wickets in Johor.