

Sixth place for youths

Australia progressed to the final of the fifth place play-off in the ICC Under-19 World Cup...

They were declared winners on the basis of a superior average net run-rate throughout the tournament...

Earlier, Bangladesh crashed from 51-1 to 115 all out as the Australian bowlers combined well...

Left-handed opener Amit Mazumder, playing his first game of the competition, cracked a 79-ball 43 but fell to left-arm spinner Clive Rose...

Brothers sail, Jatrabari fail

Brothers Union and Azad Sporting Club completed their third victories by the same margin in the First Division Cricket League...

In the main cricket venue, Azad (160-5 in 42.5 overs) earned a five-wicket win over Dhaka Wanderers Club...

At the other ground, Brothers (154-5 in 46.4 overs) rode on Monirul's 52 as they trounced Bangladesh Boys...

Saidul smacked 70 as Sadhan Bima (228-7 in 50 overs) earned their first win of the league...

Rony's 79 and Kamal's five-for gave Lalmita Club (229 all out in 50 overs) a 13-run win over Agrani Bank...

At the Jahangirnagar University ground, Cricket Coaching School (162-6 in 39.3 overs) beat fancied Jatrabari...

Jalal receives BCB support

Bangladesh Cricket Board yesterday handed a Tk 2 lakh cheque to cricket operations committee member Jalal Ahmed Chowdhury...

Cricket operations chairman Gazi Ashraf Hossain and acting CEO Nizamuddin Chowdhury visited the noted cricket coach at the hospital and handed over a get-well card...

According to the BCB media release, it was a token of appreciation for his contribution to Bangladesh cricket.



Pearu's death anniversary

Today is the fourth death anniversary of footballer and organiser Khairul Anwar Pearu, who was shot to death by gunmen at the Dhanmondi Club premises.

On this occasion, a quran khwani, milad mahfil and feeding of destitute will be held today at his native village in Farhadnagar, Feni.

His relatives and well wishers have been requested to attend the programme.

A national sports award winner as a footballer, Pearu was the senior vice-president of Bangladesh Football Federation and president of Dhanmondi Club.

A needless dig

Cricket

AFP, Sydney

Claims and counter-claims flew Thursday after senior Australian batsman Matthew Hayden was officially reprimanded for calling Indian spinner Harbhajan Singh an "obnoxious little weed."

Tensions continue to simmer in a summer of cricket acrimony ahead of Sunday's first final in the one-day tri-series here between the two fiercely competitive rivals.

Cricket Australia's code of behaviour commissioner Ron Beazley late Wednesday upheld a charge that Hayden had breached the code of conduct with his public comment about Harbhajan and issued a reprimand.

Hayden pleaded his innocence and escaped a possible suspension and fine.

The Hayden incident is the latest in a series of controversies, and follows a racism row, threats by India to leave, and players fined for aggressive behaviour.

The fall-out continued Thursday with Harbhajan claiming Hayden was one of the most disliked figures in world cricket.

"I don't want it to be a slanging match, but you only need to speak to international cricketers and international teams to know in what opinion they hold Hayden," Harbhajan told Sydney's The Daily Telegraph newspaper.

Harbhajan also accused Australia of trying to cover up their on-field sledging by hiding among their teammates to avoid being detected by television cameras.

Another unnamed Indian player told the Hindustan Times that Hayden was "insane" and vowed to give him "the fight" the tourists believe he is asking for.

"It's not strategy, it's insane and asking for a fight. And if he wants that, we'll give it to him," the player told the newspaper.

"He will not stop making sarcastic or plain rude remarks, whether he is fielding or batting. It is very difficult to not get upset and we don't see why he is allowed to get away with his constant barbs."

The latest controversy has again reactivated hostilities between the two teams.

"Matthew Hayden was charged for simply saying what most Australians feel about Harbhajan Singh," The Daily Telegraph said Thursday.

"What is wrong with calling Harby an obnoxious little weed? It's not racist, it's not all that rude and it's certainly not bad for the game."

The Australian newspaper described Hayden's comments as "foolish."

"Named one-day player of the year, Hayden foolishly said on Brisbane radio before the presentation what many in the team think about Harbhajan," the newspapers said.

"While it was meant to be a light-hearted radio interview, Hayden's lack of diplomacy has poured petrol on a bushfire and has given the Indians something substantial to complain about."

Melbourne's Herald-Sun said Australian captain Ricky Ponting had to show leadership in the potentially explosive best-of-three match ODI finals series.

"If there is a fight on hand, he won't shy away from it. To a certain extent, that's what leadership is all about," the newspaper said.

"Leadership, too, is about remaining calm and letting your actions tell the story."

Bond deal under siege

Cricket

AFP, London

Shane Bond's contract to play for English county Hampshire this season has been called into question because of the player's links with the 'rebel' Indian Cricket League (ICL) after officials warned it would be taken into account when assessing his registration.

Former New Zealand quick Bond, 32, signed by Hampshire as early-season cover for Shane Warne, and Pakistan's Navedul Hasan, due to play for Yorkshire, featured in November's inaugural ICL.

But the ICL is opposed by the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI), which has organised its own Twenty20 event, the Indian Premier League (IPL), due to get underway in April.

Unlike the ICL, the IPL has International Cricket Council (ICC) backing, with many of the world's top players signed up on highly lucrative contracts.

Bond took part in the inaugural ICL in November after it offered him the kind of financial security he could only dream about as a New Zealand player.

In October the ICC ruled no contracted international player could be released for the rebel league, effectively ending Bond's

New Zealand career, and ruling the injury-prone fast bowler out of his country's forthcoming tour of England.

The England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB), following a "full report on the impact and threat of unauthorised events to the infrastructure of the sport," said in a statement here Wednesday: "The ECB board are determined to disassociate and distance itself from any promoter, agent or individual involved in such events."

The statement added: "It was further noted that unqualified cricketers requiring a 'no objection certificate' to be registered for cricket in England and Wales are unlikely to receive such certificates from their home boards if they participate in unauthorised events."

"In order to protect the genuine interests in the development of grassroots and county cricket and protecting anti-doping and anti-corruption measures, the ECB policy to condemn unauthorised events will be taken into consideration when evaluating any application to register players for county cricket."

It is unlikely that any top-flight English players will participate in the IPL as the dates for the tournament, between April and June, clash with the start of the domestic season and are at a time when Test matches will be taking place in

England. England duo Chris Read and Paul Nixon, two players whose international careers appear to be over, featured in the first edition of the ICL.

The ECB reiterated Wednesday its October warning that playing in the ICL would adversely affect a player's chances of international selection.

"This policy clearly demonstrates a preference towards players and officials who do not participate in unofficial events." Counties received a similar warning over staging unsanctioned matches.

"No member, or venue receiving any funding from the ECB, will be allowed to host such events."

Traditionally, counties have had little control over where their players earn money during the off-season. But the ECB said one way of preventing them taking part in the ICL or other 'rebel' events was for players to be given year-long contracts.

"All counties will be actively supported and encouraged to enter into 12-month playing contracts," the ECB statement said.

Cricket administrators argue they must take action against events such as the ICL in order to ensure the money from Test matches and one-day internationals which funds the sport at all levels isn't diverted elsewhere.

Amla, Harris get ODI spot

AFP, Chittagong

South Africa named batsman Hashim Amla and left-arm spinner Paul Harris in a 14-man squad for upcoming one-day clashes against Bangladesh yesterday.

The selectors opted to include the two, who are yet to play one-day international cricket, with an eye to future commitments on the subcontinent.

Pakistan are hosting the Champions Trophy this autumn while the next World Cup, in 2011, will be co-hosted by India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh.

And India are hosting South Africa for a Test series starting next month.

"Selectors were keen to try Amla in one-dayers and see how he fares. Also, we always wanted to try out two spinners in view of two key events to be hosted by the subcontinent," South African media manager Michael Owen Smith said.

"We wanted to expose Harris to the sub-continental conditions with an eye on the tour of India. We need to be fresh and ready for that challenge."

Off-spinner Johan Botha is the other spinner in the squad, playing their first ODI series since the retirement of pace bowler Shaun Pollock this month.

Veteran all-rounder Jacques Kallis, wicketkeeper Mark Boucher and paceman Makhaya Ntini are rested, with Graeme Smith continuing to lead the side.

There was speculation that Smith would be among the seniors who would fly back home after the second Test against Bangladesh beginning here on Friday, ahead of the three-Test tour of India.

But Owen said an experienced senior player was needed to guide the young team through conditions.

Smith will also play in the much-hyped Indian Premier League Twenty20 competition, slated to start on April 18.

Opener Herschelle Gibbs, who comes in for Neil McKenzie, fast bowler Charl Langeveldt and all-rounder Vernon Philander are expected to join the squad on March 2.

LOCAL SNIPPETS

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh's chances to reach the qualifying rounds of the Junior Davis Cup was damaged as they slumped to fourth place on the penultimate day of the tournament's Asia-Oceania zone pre-qualifiers in Malaysia.

Bangladesh did not play yesterday but Pakistan's 2-1 loss to second-placed Kazakhstan meant the two sub-continent teams were level on points. However, Pakistan were third by virtue of their win against Bangladesh on the opening day. In another match yesterday, Malaysia beat Sri Lanka 3-0 to remain atop the table.

Li Gen Masud Uddin Chowdhury, Principal Staff Officer of Armed Forces Division distributed trophies as the chief guest. The students were also awarded for participating in different sports events held round the year.

NAT'L BOXING The 24th National Senior Boxing Championship will get underway at the Muhammad Ali Boxing Stadium. There will be 11 events in the three-day meet, which will be declared open by sponsor Southeast Bank Limited's managing director Neyaz Ahmed.

JABBARTENNIS The Jabbar Memorial tennis tournament will begin in the city today at the Engineers Recreation Centre court in the city. About 20 clubs across from the country will take part in eight events. The Tk 75,800 tournament will end on March 6 with only the men's and women's singles and men's doubles having prize money.

SCHOOL HOCKEY UNB adds: Ahmed Bawany Academy crushed Narayanangaj High School 13-0 in the first semifinal at the Maulana Bhasani National Hockey Stadium to reach the final of the Dhaka Bank Shaheed Smriti School hockey tournament. Shawon and skipper Faisal Hossain scored four goals each for the winners who led 6-0 at the break.

Armanitola Government Boys School face Mirpur Academy in the second semifinal today. The final is slated for March 2.

KABADDI The Pran Juice 11th Premier Division Kabaddi League will begin today at the Outer Stadium kabaddi court with holders champions Bangladesh Rifles playing Bangladesh Navy and Bangladesh Police meeting Shaheed Mozaffar Smriti Sangsad on the opening day. ABM Abdul Fattah, director (administration) of National Sports Council, will formally inaugurate the 12-day meet as chief guest.

Twelve teams split into two groups are taking part in the competition. Sponsors Pran RFL Group will provide Tk 80,000 of the total tournament budget of Tk 1,25,000.

Youngmen's closer to top

SPORTS REPORTER

Youngmen's Club Fakirerpool moved within one point of leaders Victoria Sporting Club with a match in hand when they blanked Dipali Juba Sangha 2-0 in yesterday's Senior Division Football League at the Bangabandhu National Stadium.

Shakawat Hossain Rony slotted both the goals, in the 16 and 18 minutes as Youngmen's extended their collection to 21 points from 11 matches.

Victoria, who have played all their 12 matches in the first leg, are on 22 points.

Jatrabari Kriya Chakra, having dominated most of the fray, drew goalless with Dhaka Wanderers at the Birshreshtha Shaheed Mostafa Kamal Stadium in Kamalapur.

It was newcomers Jatrabari's first draw which saw them at fourth place with 19 points after 11 games.

Sixth place Wanderers, who also have a match in hand, kept their hopes alive to book place in the six-team super league with 15 points.

Boro scrape

FROM PAGE 20

Boro had enjoyed the better of the first 90 minutes but it was their Championship opponents who finished stronger.

After almost finding Rob Hulse with a knockdown four minutes from the end, Beattie could have won the tie in the final minute of regulation time but failed to hit the target after being found by Welsh veteran midfielder Gary Speed's ball into the near post.

Bashar rules

FROM PAGE 17

worth to make his comeback in the team.

"Bangladesh's next two series will be held late in 2008 and in that time I will only be able to play the Premier League to show my worth. It would have been better if there National Cricket League was going on. But whatever it is, board has told me not to take any decision in one year," he informed.

Bashar however promised that he will not be crying for any match to make his farewell from the field. "I am not that kind of man."

Gilly defends Hayden

Cricket

AFP, Melbourne

Batting star Adam Gilchrist Thursday defended Matthew Hayden, at the centre of the latest spat between Australia and India, saying he does not care what others think about his fellow opener.

Hayden ignited yet another row between the sides when he called spinner Harbhajan Singh an "obnoxious weed" on Australian radio on Tuesday.

Harbhajan replied by saying Hayden was one of the most disliked players in world cricket.

"Who is Matthew Hayden? You only need to speak to international cricketers... to know in what opinion they hold Hayden," Harbhajan said.

Speaking here, Gilchrist said he paid little heed to Harbhajan's words.

"I've not ever cared to think what other teams think of Matthew Hayden," he said. "He's one of the most well-respected people in our team, so that interests me."

The wicketkeeper-batsman also defended Ricky Ponting, dismissing Harbhajan's claims the Australian skipper used abusive language towards him during Sunday's tri-series game in Sydney.

He said Ponting did not say anything inflammatory during the game, after which India officially complained to match referee Jeff Crowe about the provocative behaviour of Ponting, Hayden and Andrew Symonds.

Gilchrist said the controversy swirling around his farewell international season has worn him down.

The Hayden incident is the latest in a series of controversies, and follows a racism row, threats by India to leave, and players fined for aggressive behaviour.

"Everyone is over it a little bit now," Gilchrist said. "I'm just trying to get on with the finals and play some cricket."

"I can't speak on behalf of everyone, particularly on their team, and I haven't spoken to our guys about it, but I'm sure everyone is just keen to let cricket get on."

"There's been a lot on, a lot of issues, I haven't played in too many summers where... there's been a number of issues you could bring to mind."

Australia play Sri Lanka in a "dead rubber" on Friday in Melbourne, before locking horns with the Indians again in the tri-series finals, starting on Tuesday.

Gilchrist said it was important Australia remained focused on playing good cricket.

Henin survives a scare

Tennis

AFP, Dubai

Justine Henin suffered an opening match scare for the second successive year as she sought to maintain an unbeaten record by winning her fifth title in a row at the Dubai Open.

The world number one from Belgium had to save two points to avoid going a break down in the final set against Katarina Srebotnik before beating the Slovenian qualifier 7-5, 6-7 (6/8) 6-3.

Last year Henin was within a point of trailing 1-4 in the final set against Tamira Paszek, an Austrian then aged only 16, but her survival kick-started a year in which she won titles.

Then Henin was returning to competition after a marital breakup. Now she is coming back after a knee injury and energy-sapping

family reunions. Srebotnik often hit the ball very hard and, as the chance of victory emerged, with increasing consistency too, recovering from a mini-break down in the tie-break to force a decider.

But just when she needed it, Henin hit the accelerator, coming to the net more, applying pressure from the baseline with angles and variations of spin, and ending the match with several games of colourful, high-quality attack.

What had been in danger of becoming a disaster concluded with perhaps her most encouraging performance of the year so far.

Certainly Henin thought so. "I only recovered now from what happened to me in 2007," she said. "Mentally and emotionally I was pretty tired in Australia. Today I really enjoyed being out there, even if it wasn't perfect."



World number one Justine Henin of Belgium makes a forehand return against Katarina Srebotnik of Slovenia during their Dubai Open match on Wednesday.

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS: 1 Barber-shop item, 5 Medicine, 9 Triumph, 12 Mel, 13 Quaker's address, 14 - out a living, 15 Slurdy Director, 18 Timber wolf, 19 Dieter's entree, 21 Side road, 24 Stopper, 25 Was regretful, 26 Firmly necessary, 30 Blueprint addition, 31 Unyielding, 32 Man-mouse link, 33 Opulent, 35 Basin, 36 Partially mine, 37 Mascara applicators. DOWN: 2 Concist, 21 Chrono-mas, 23 Functioning smoothly, 24 Ad-writer's award, 26 Courts, 27 Bygone days (Arch.), 28 Angered, 29 Sailors, 31 Scatterer, 34 Drag around, 35 Atelier props, 37 Symbol of, 16 Tarzan's son, 17 Intrigue, 38 Anathema, 39 Verve, 40 Trudge, 41 "Casa-blanca" heroine, 44 Historic period, 45 Debt paper, 46 - de-plume, 47 Pontiac muscle car.

Grid for crossword puzzle with numbers 1-47 indicating starting positions.

CRYPTOQUIP

U B Z H W X H Q H T " H GBWUPMQH GHWRD" RFZTZX H MRRD PBRF HTX THQZZ UM " GWHMGBUM'P WHMGBZMP " Yesterdays Cryptoquip: BECAUSE I'M A TRAINED EXPERT AT HANDLING BABY SHEEP, YOU MIGHT CALL ME LAMB-IDEXTROUS. Today's Cryptoquip Clue: U equals I