



Did U Know?

Underwater swimming competition the first and only time was held at the 1900 Olympics in Paris.



Imran Khan

(Pakistan cricket legend)
"Musharraf blindly follows the United States in the war against terror and we are paying the price. Because of that we are now at a stage when no one is ready to play cricket here."
While expressing his disappointment at Australia's decision to postpone their tour of Pakistan.



What to WATCH

SAB TV
New Zealand v England
Second Test, Day Four
Live from 3:30am (Sunday)

ESPN
English Premier Football League
Derby County v Man United
Live from 8:55pm

Primera Liga
Deportivo v Real Madrid
Live from 1:00am (Sunday)

Valencia v Sevilla
Live from 3:00am (Sunday)

STAR Sports
English Premier Football League
Liverpool v Reading
Live from 8:55pm

Arsenal v Middlesbrough
Live from 11:10pm

LOCAL SNIPPETS

SPORTS REPORTER

Jewel and Biplab struck either side of the break to give Sunrise KC a 2-1 win against Dhaka Wanderers in yesterday's super six match of the Senior Division Football League at the Bangabandhu National Stadium. Hirok Joarder pulled one goal back for the losers.

In the relegation league, Mohakhali Ekadash defeated Dipali JS 3-1 with Moina, Golap and Zakir each scoring one for the winners. Milon reduced the arrears for Dipali.

JFA CUP

Sajib scored a brace to help Dinajpur brush aside Dhaka 5-0 in the final round of the 4th JFA Cup Under-15 Football Championship at the Rajshahi Divisional Stadium yesterday.

Liton, Rafiqul and Jamil added one goal each in Dinajpur's opening match of the finals.

In the other match, Bhola recorded their first win when they edged Kushtia by a solitary goal. It was Kushtia's second consecutive loss in as many matches.

NAT'L CHESS

FIDE Masters Sheikh Nasir Ahmed, Syed Mahfuzur Rahman Emon and Minhajuddin Ahmed Sagar shared the lead with Mohammed Javed after the penultimate round of the 34th National Chess Championship qualifying rounds. After ten rounds, the four players had eight points each.

Sagar drew with Emon as Nasir and Javed joined the two with wins against Moniruzzaman Khan and Taibur Rahman respectively.

The qualifiers will conclude today.

NAVY VOLLEYBALL

BNS Issa Khan lifted the Bangladesh Navy annual volleyball championship title yesterday defeating BNS Haji Mohsin 3-1 at the BN College in Dhaka.

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Tigers end in shambles 'Responsibility the difference'

BISHWAJIT ROY

WARID Cricket Series

There was no sign of consolation for Mohammed Ashraf's men as their woes compounded following the end of their home campaign at the Mirpur Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium yesterday.

Not to mention why. If the Tigers' batting in the preceding two Tests and ODI's was horrible, then the efforts of the third one-dayer was almost indescribable and painful to watch.

The home captain was lucky enough to rightly call the coin for the third successive occasion and decide to bat first on a surface where batting in the afternoon was not an easy task at all. And South African skipper Graeme Smith made it clear how important it was to get the favour of luck on this kind of tricky track.

One may now ridicule with the popular proverb that says 'fortune favours the brave' after the Bangladesh team spoiled the opportunity. It hardly needs any explanation of what happened in the match when a team is bundled out for 143 runs in just 42.5 overs.

Local umpire Nadir Shah may have started the rot with what seemed to be an inaccurate decision against Tamim Iqbal but in the end, the 20,000-strong crowd in the

big bowl forgot what Nadir did. They were rather searching for an answer: why come here to spoil a (weekly) holiday?

Tamim and his opening partner Shahriar Nafees were lucky enough to manage 34 runs for the first wicket and not to get out early after fishing around the off-stump against the rival new ball pair of Dale Steyn and Morne Morkel.

And those who were hoping something from Ashraf's bat afterwards, were only disappointed. Without any doubt, it was a perfect delivery by Albie Morkel to pull but what the country's best batsman forgot was that he was not in good enough touch to go for the charge too early. Once again, the same old question arises: when will he understand his game?

Not to say anything of the newcomers because one may worry about the future of Bangladesh cricket as they simply gave the impression of how helpless our cricketers.

Bangladesh picked up eleven players who can bat but the outcome was nothing that could challenge the visitors.

One can take the words of Proteas captain Smith for answers about where the problem actually lies. The left-hander did not say anything directly but what he wanted to say was that the lack of responsibility in the Tigers' batting caused the damage.

He was also not ready to consider 'inexperience' behind the home side's debacle in the series.

"I am really happy with the outcome of the series because we, especially our young guys, showed character and the depth of the team. What impressed me most is the way the young players batted and bowled with responsibility," said Smith adding that their recent success was just the beginning of a bigger one in the year.

"You can't say that inexperience was the issue for your (Bangladesh) team. Just think we have some players who have played less matches than some of your cricketers. But they played with responsibility," he said of his colleagues.

"In this kind of condition it was not easy to play shots, but your batsmen did," he added.

He once again said that it would have been a difficult task for them to chase a total like 220 in this condition but Bangladesh lost an opportunity to put up the challenge despite winning the toss in all three games.

Understandably, there was hardly anything for the Bangladesh skipper Ashraf to say and he tried to accept everything that came from the reporters in the post-match briefing including the allegation that they were irresponsible.

And what the ace batsman got from the volatile pressman yesterday was definitely something new

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South Africa captain Graeme Smith (2nd from R) receives the Warid ODI Series trophy from Army chief General Moeen U Ahmed (L) during the presentation ceremony after the third and final match against Bangladesh at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday. Also seen in the picture are Bangladesh Cricket Board president Major General Sina Ibn Jamali (2nd from L) and sponsors Warid Telecom's chief executive officer Muneer Farooqui.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

England take firm grip

Cricket

AFP, Wellington

A century by Tim Ambrose and a five-wicket haul for James Anderson gave England a firm grip on the second Test against New Zealand by the end of the second day here Friday.

England were four without loss in their second innings at stumps for a commanding 148-run lead after routing New Zealand inside three sessions for 198.

Barring weather intervention, a result seems almost certain in the Test after 15 wickets fell in the day.

England, looking to make amends after losing the first Test, resumed the day at 291 for five in their first innings and Ambrose reached his maiden Test century as they added 51 runs before folding

at 342.

New Zealand struggled to 100 for three by tea and then capitulated, losing their last seven wickets for 96 runs and leaving England openers Michael Vaughan and Alastair Cook to negotiate five overs before the close.

Recalled paceman Anderson was the chief destroyer of the New Zealand innings, taking out Matthew Bell for a duck and Jamie How for seven in his opening spell.

He removed Mathew Taylor (nine) after lunch before Stephen Fleming and Ross Taylor rallied the New Zealand innings with a 71-run stand, which ended soon after the tea break when Anderson struck twice more to finish with five for 79.

He had Fleming caught at backward point by Kevin Pietersen for 34 and then dismissed Taylor for 53, caught by wicketkeeper Ambrose.

It was not the complete innings

former New Zealand captain Fleming wanted in his last Test at the Basin Reserve.

He received a standing ovation when he reached 18 to become the first New Zealand cricketer to amass 7,000 Test runs, but his first century on his adopted home ground continues to elude him.

Although he went on to score another 16 runs, Fleming never appeared comfortable in the face of swing bowling from Anderson and Stuart Broad.

He earned a reprieve on 18 when dropped by Paul Collingwood off Broad, and survived a run out chance in the final over before lunch when Kevin Pietersen's throw was wide and Monty Panesar was unable to remove the balls.

Collingwood, normally one of England's most reliable catchers,

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England fast bowler James Anderson (L), who took five New Zealand wickets, exults after seeing the back of Ross Taylor on the second day of the second Test at Wellington yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

November or March?

Cricket

CRICINFO, undated

The Pakistan Cricket Board will look to reschedule Australia's Test tour in November or next March after the original trip was postponed on Tuesday. Australia's players are relieved the decision was made to cancel the visit over security and safety concerns, but they are still due in the country for the Champions Trophy tournament in October, an event David Morgan, the ICC president-elect, wants to go ahead as planned.

Shafqat Nagmi, the PCB's chief operating officer, told the Sydney Morning Herald Cricket Australia had asked the hosts to propose a new date. "We have looked at the international schedule and all of the other factors, and we think either November this year or March next year would be a good time for the tour to go ahead," Nagmi said.

"If it was to proceed in November, it would most likely be a split tour, with the Australians then coming back in March."

"But if it were to take place in March, it would be a full tour. From reading James Sutherland's statements, I think he favours March." Australia are also due in India in October and will host a Test series against New Zealand and start a contest with South Africa before the end of 2008.

Both the PCB and the Australian government do not believe the Indian Premier League (IPL), which is due to start on April 18, had any influence on the team staying home. "There have been suggestions that somehow the decision by Cricket Australia and the Pakistan Cricket Board is related to proposed Twenty20 games in India," Stephen Smith, Australia's foreign minister, said in the Australian.

"I absolutely reject that suggestion. From the first time I had a

conversation with Cricket Australia about this matter, I was absolutely convinced that CA had the security, safety and welfare of their players and any members of a touring party uppermost in their minds."

The window in the calendar theoretically frees Australia's players to take part in the lucrative IPL, but there have been suggestions Cricket Australia will stage a short limited-overs series before leaving for the West Indies on May 10. However, Tim Nielsen, the national coach, has not finalised Australia's schedule and believes Twenty20 games would be good preparation.

"As long as it fits in and Cricket Australia is comfortable with it, I don't have any problem," Nielsen told the Age. "It is nice that they can play some competitive cricket. I always encourage guys to be playing county cricket when it fits in because it is nice to be playing competitive, organised cricket. It is

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Ireland arrive for 3-match series tonight

SPORTS REPORTER

Ireland cricket team are due to arrive in Dhaka tonight to play a three-match one-day series against Bangladesh from Tuesday.

They take on the Tigers on March 18 at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium and then play the next two matches on March 22 and 24 in the same venue.

The last time they faced Bangladesh, it was in the World Cup in West Indies and it was not a happy memory for the Tigers as they lost by 47 runs in a Super Eight encounter.

Led by Trent Johnston, the Irish team will arrive with the confidence of winning an ICC inter-continental match against UAE last week. They will also have the services of wicketkeeper-batsman Niall O'Brien, who became the first player to return to international cricket after having a stint at the Indian Cricket League (ICL).

Meanwhile, BCB announced yesterday that tickets will go on sale at all nominated AB Bank Limited branches in Dhaka from 1pm on March 16. VIP tickets are worth Tk 300, clubhouse Tk 200, special enclosure Tk 100 and gallery tickets are priced at Tk 30.

SQUAD

Trent Johnston (captain), William Porterfield (vice-captain), Kyle McCallan, Kevin O'Brien, Niall O'Brien, Andre Botha, Alex Cusack, Reinhardt Strydom, Thinus Fourie, Gary Kidd, Greg Thompson, Eoin Morgan, Paul Stirling, David Langford-Smith, Phil Eaglestone.

2nd B. League transfer from today!

SPORTS REPORTER

Despite the eight Dhaka clubs' denial to take part in the B. League players' transfers, the Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) decided to move ahead with their plan.

According to B. League tournament committee chairman Abdur Rahim, the transfer will start today for the second edition of the professional football league.

"The transfers will be on from today as schedule. The clubs can take part if they wish," Rahim, also a BFF vice-president, told yesterday.

The clubs have said they would not take part in the bourse under the present BFF executive body. However, general secretary of Dhaka giants and B. League runners-up Mohammedan Sporting Club informed that the clubs will sit today to reconsider their decision to respect the BFF request.

The BFF has requested the clubs to participate in the transfer for the greater interest of the game and footballers.

Biman, MSC, DOHS win

Cricket

SPORTS REPORTER

There were close wins for Old DOHS and Bangladesh Biman while Mohammedan Sporting Club annihilated Victoria by 10 wickets in the Premier League fourth round matches yesterday.

Mohammedan openers Imtiaz Hossain and Imrul Kayes took 28.5 overs to reach 142 after left-arm spinner Suhawardi Shuvo helped destroy Victoria's strong batting line-up for only 140 in 44.3 overs at the BKSP Cricket ground in Savar.

Away at the Fatullah Cricket Stadium, it was Rajin Saleh's 86 that made sure Old DOHS made 202-9 in 50 overs. Surjo Tarun were always in the chase but some tight bowling from the DOHS spinners ensured they fell short by only

threeruns.

Biman banked on half-centuries from Nafis Iqbal and Alok Kapali to secure a 15-run victory over struggling Sonargaon Cricketers.

MSC-VICTORIA

Mohammedan's fast men took control of the match early, after being put into field first by Victoria captain Ehsanul Haque.

Skipper Monjurul Islam, Taposh Baisya and Tareq Aziz all took two wickets each as the Motijheel giants reduced Victoria to 88-6.

Later, it was Suhawardi Shuvo's spin that ended Victoria's defiance. The under-19 captain took four for 21 in his 9.3 overs to earn the man-of-the-match award.

Imtiaz smashed eight boundaries in his 90-ball 61 but it was Imrul who was the aggressor, scoring 79 off 83 balls including 11

boundaries and two sixes as Mohammedan ran to their fourth successive victory. Aftab Ahmed, who was felled by a Jacques Kallis in the second Test, returned to action albeit mutely as he only had a bowl conceding 16 in three overs.

OLD DOHS-SURJO TARUN

Khaled Mashud put Old DOHS into bat and his decision bore fruit as his Rajshahi teammate Delwar Hossain snared three wickets in the first 11 overs. Opener Rajin saw the damage and build a 71-run fourth wicket stand with captain Mehrab Hossain, who scored 36 off 41 balls.

Man-of-the-match Rajin was on course for a century but was brilliantly caught at long-on by Tarun's Pakistani recruit Saad Nasim. He scored 86 off 132 balls with eight boundaries.

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Gunners draw Liverpool MU, Roma repeat tie

AFP, Nyon



Arsenal will meet fellow English giants Liverpool in the Champions League quarter-finals following the draw made

here on Friday.

Four English clubs are in the final eight and Arsene Wenger's side were the first out of the hat for their first leg at home on April 1-2, with the return leg against the 2005 champions at Anfield on April 8-9.

The tie means that Arsenal and Liverpool, last season's finalists, will play each other three times in one week as the two European legs sandwich a Premier League game.

Liverpool chief executive Rick Parry told Sky Sports: "We'd hoped to avoid the English teams at this stage but statistically there were

bound to be two coming together and unfortunately it's us."

"We play Arsenal in a league game in between so we'll be playing them three times in a week."

"It'll be very similar. We know them extremely well and they know us."

"The three games are going to be very, very tight. I don't think the Champions League is going to be any different, it's tough."

He added: "We've successfully avoided a trip to Turkey (to face Fenerbahce) so that's a bonus."

Arsenal managing director Keith Edelman for his part said: "Liverpool are a great team. They've obviously had fantastic performances in this competition and we'll play them three times in a week, so we'll get to know them pretty well."

"I think it should make compelling viewing for the fans and I think

they'll be very exciting matches."

Arsenal reached the Champions League final in 2006, losing to Barcelona, and Edelman said the last-16 victory over defending champions AC Milan should give them a lot of encouragement.

"The AC Milan match was very important. We played some sublime football and to go and beat them in the San Siro must give us a lot of hope and belief we can go all the way this time."

Manchester United came up against old foes AS Roma.

Sir Alex Ferguson's side inflicted a 7-1 thrashing of the Italians in the return leg of the quarterfinals last season for an 8-3 aggregate win.

The two clubs also crossed swords in the current campaign's group stage.

Manchester United club secretary Ken Ramsden commented:

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A board shows the teams drawn on Friday in the Swiss city of Nyon for the Champions League quarterfinals.

PHOTO: AFP