



Did U Know?

Andre Agassi refused to play Wimbledon from 1988 to 1990 because of the all-white dress code what he regarded as the stuffy atmosphere.



Anil Kumble
(India Test captain)
"With so many Tests coming up, I'm sure we'll get a chance to meet again soon to celebrate 700 wickets." While expressing his optimism at a ceremony where he was honoured for having taken 600 Test wickets.



TEN Sports
UEFA Champions League
AS Roma v Manchester
Live from 12:00am (Wednesday)
FC Schalke04 v FC Barcelona
Delayed from 2:45am (Wednesday)

ESPN
Sportscentre India
Sports News
Live at 8:30pm



Premier Div Cricket League
Victoria v Surjo Torun
Venue: BKSP-2
Old DOHS v BKSP
Venue: Dhanmondi Cricket Stadium
Kalabagan v Partex
Venue: Fatullah Cricket Stadium
Abahani v Mohammedan
Venue: Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium
Young Pegasus v City Club
Venue: BKSP-1

Zia slumps to third place

SPORTS REPORTER

Grand Master Ziaur Rahman slipped to third position after losing the eighth round game against Indian GM Sandipan Chandra in the 3rd Kolkata Open Grandmasters Chess tournament at the Gorky Sadan in Kolkata yesterday.

Zia, who shared the lead after the seventh round, played with black pieces and took Modern defence before losing at 39 moves.

GM Krishnan Sasikiran, GM Koneru Humpy and GM Sandipan Chandra of India and GM Viktor Laznicka of Czech Republic were sharing lead with 6.5 points each.

Zia shared the third spot along with nine other players including his teammate GM Abdullah Al Rakib, who drew with GM Tejas Bakre of India, with 5.5 points.

GM Niaz Murshed and IM Enamul Hossain Rajib bagged five points each. FM Sheikh Nasir Ahmed earned four points, FM Minhazuddin Ahmed, FM Taibur Rahman, Mohammad Javed and FM Mehdi Hasan Parag secured 3.5 points.

In the other 8th round games, Niaz drew with GM Smbat Lputian of Armenia, Rajib drew with Rolando Nolte of Philippines, Nasir beat Sagar Shah of India, Sagar drew with Bitan Banerjee of India, Taibur beat Abhuranu Dutta of India, Parag beat Anuprita Patil of India and Javed lost to IM RR Laxman of India.

Battle royal today

Cricket

SPORTS REPORTER

Mohammedan Sporting Club go into the final game of the first leg of the Premier Cricket League today with an aim to finish atop. But the hurdle they have to overcome is none other than their archrivals and reigning champions Abahani at the Mirpur Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium.

Another defeat for third-placed Abahani, who are three points shy of their old foes with 15 points from 10 matches, however, will simply make their position vulnerable in the title race.

In a changed scenario the fans are hardly gripped in the same excitement of the past with the battle of the two traditional rivals. So, the players of both teams now don't feel extra pressure ahead of the clash.

"I don't think there is any extra pressure in any tent because those days are over. It's still fresh in my mind the way fans had plunged into excitement before any Abahani-Mohammedan match," said national and Mohammedan

skipper Mohammad Ashraful. One, however, may be more interested to see whether Ashraful can payback his team in the crucial match.

It was evident that the Pakistan-bound national players failed to grab the opportunity of good match practice before they fly for Karachi on April 6 for a five-match one-day series and a Twenty20 match.

The Tigers entered the coveted league competition after a successful series against Ireland and many believed that they would carry their form into the league to prepare well for the demanding trip. But only a few showed signs of form in the last four rounds they have played so far.

Mohammedan signed five national players but they hardly got any return from them except young batter Rokibul Hasan who has played two match-winning knocks.

The performance of Ashraful, Aftab Ahmed and Zunaed Siddiqui, who lost composure after making a half-century in his first game against City Club, have been really frustrating so far.

And chief selector Rafiqul Alam was no exception.

"The performance of the

national team players is really disappointing. They should show something extraordinary when they play any domestic competition but their performance hardly showed it," said Rafiqul.

"The top batsmen totally failed to take the opportunity ahead of the Pakistan tour. Only Mashrafe (Bin Mortaza) made the difference apart from young Rokibul (Hasan). Our national team bowlers' performance was not too bad but everyone knows that our main problem lies in batting," the former national cricketer added.

Abahani captain Tushar Imran, who is also out of form, sees the issue as an advantage for them in the crucial match.

"I think it's a big advantage for us that except Rokibul none of the Mohammedan national players are in form. It's a very crucial match for us to keep our team in the title race," said Tushar adding that their opener Jahurul Islam and paceman Nazmul Hossain are unlikely to play the game.

He, however, pinned hopes on left-handed Shahriar Nafees, who made a fifty against Biman but ended up in the losing side.

Experience required

Nat'l camp moves to BKSP today

Football

SPORTS REPORTER

Abu Yusuf gave the national team their first full-fledged training yesterday as six Abahani players joined the camp at the Bangabandhu National Stadium.

Abahani, preparing for this month's AFC President's Cup, were reluctant to let go their players before the Asian club cup competition but after a lot of persuasion, the sky-blues released their players.

The players, who received training gear from national team sponsor Nokia although the official handover of kits will take place at BKSP later, will move to the Savar sports institute this morning.

The team's first training session will start at 10am today.

Yusuf, in his first assignment with the national team, is in charge of a very young side that will compete in the AFC Challenge Cup preliminary rounds in Kyrgyzstan next month and the SAFF Football Championship in Sri Lanka and

Maldives in June.

The former defender, however, will be under pressure with a relatively new-look team who will face top teams in both competitions.

Home side Kyrgyzstan will be the main barrier on way to the Challenge Cup finals as only one team among the central Asian nation, Afghanistan and Laos will join the automatic qualifiers in the final round, expected to be held in India.

Bangladesh, however, face a comparatively easy task in their SAFF Championship group in Colombo where they are pitted against hosts Sri Lanka and rank outsiders Bhutan and Afghanistan.

With India, Maldives, Nepal and Pakistan in a group of death, it could be difficult for 2003 champions Bangladesh to maintain the good run in the event as they will face one of those teams in the semis. Under foreign coaches, Bangladesh have reached three of the previous four finals, in Goa, Dhaka and Karachi.

Bangladesh's 2-0 defeat to India in the last final in Karachi after eliminating hosts Pakistan in a

gruelling semifinal was a shock but since then, football in the country walked the wrong way.

Many senior players have retired due to frustration and anger over selection policy or dissident with coaches and injury. The list is getting bigger day by day with the likes of Nazrul, probably the best centre-back in the country at the present moment, defenders Siraji, Sujan and Titu, midfielders Matiu Munnna and Joy and striker Moni being ignored.

But the federation and the new coach did not try to bring them back although most of the replacements even do not have experience of playing in the top domestic level.

It means some seniors, still in good form, have not been included in the preliminary squad. Many fear that Bangladesh will not be able to take the best team to the competitions, especially the SAFF Championship where the team are always regarded as one of the contenders.

Inducing young players may be a good idea for making teams of the future but a major competition

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Ujjal (R) and his teammate jump in the air during a physical training session as their national teammates watch at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

Kaif in for Tendulkar

Cricket

AFP, Chennai

India's star batsman Sachin Tendulkar will miss the second Test against South Africa after aggravating a groin injury, officials said on Sunday.

Tendulkar, who needs 172 runs to overtake West Indian Brian Lara as Test cricket's leading run-getter, did not field for most part of the final day's play in the first Test which was drawn earlier in the day.

"Sachin will not be playing the next Test," secretary of the Board of Control for Cricket in India Niranjan Shah said.

Tendulkar will need a week to recover and the selectors replaced him with Mohammad Kaif in the second Test starting in Ahmedabad on Thursday, Shah added.

Kaif, 27, played the last of his 13 Tests against the West Indies in Jamaica in June, 2006 and had scored 624 runs at an average of 32.84.

Kaif, a middle-order batsman,

enjoyed a successful domestic season, scoring 993 runs in 13 first-class matches at an average of 58.41.

Tendulkar is expected to be fit for the third and final Test in Kanpur from April 11.

Indian captain Anil Kumble had earlier told reporters that Tendulkar had aggravated the groin injury he suffered on the recent Australian tour, but was hopeful he would play in Ahmedabad.

Kumble himself missed part of the last day's play with a groin strain and Shah said the captain's progress will be monitored ahead of the Ahmedabad Test.

Former Indian physiotherapist John Gloster had recommended a three-week rest for Tendulkar after the Australian tour ended on March 4.

The batsman, who turns 35 next month, however, declared himself fit for the South African series.

Tendulkar, who fell for zero in India's only innings here, has 11,782 runs from 147 Tests, second behind Lara's record tally of 11,953

runs.

The prolific Indian is already the top one-day batsman with 16,361 runs and holds the world record of 39 Test and 42 one-day centuries.

Having earned the Test recall, Kaif said he was expecting to be picked based on his domestic performance.

"I had scored some 1000 to 1200 runs," Kaif told the tabloid Mumbai Mirror. "A bulk of them were scored on tough wickets so the call was kind of expected." He scored 687 runs at 59.73 from eight Ranji Trophy games for Uttar Pradesh and 266 at 52.46 from two Duleep Trophy matches for Central Zone this season.

Kaif was dropped from the Test side after India's tour of West Indies in June 2006 despite scoring an unbeaten 148 in the second Test in St Lucia.

"I had learned a lot during this period. I think whatever happens, happens for some good only. So I think there must have been some good reason of my being away from the Indian side."

"I must thank my supporters

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Real Madrid's star Italian defender Fabio Cannavaro makes an acrobatic effort to stop Sevilla's Luis Fabiano (L) from having a crack at the goal during their Primera Liga match at the Santiago Bernabeu on Sunday.

SA Academy due today

SPORTS REPORTER

The South Africa National Cricket Academy squad will arrive in Bangladesh today to take part in the Grameenphone Academy Cup also involving academy teams of Pakistan and hosts Bangladesh.

The Pakistan Academy are due in Bangladesh on April 14.

Both the teams have confirmed their squads for the four-day matches against the hosts and triangular one-day series.

SQUADS

SOUTH AFRICA: Matthew Arnold, Sammy-Joe Avontuur, Bradley Barnes, Richard Das Neves, CJ de Villiers, Reeza Hendricks, Rushdi Jappe, Mondli Mahlombe, Mafinki Serame, Mthokozisi Shezi, Abdul Aziz Temoor, Shadley van Schalkwyk, Dane Vilas and Neil Wagner.

PAKISTAN: Khalid Latif, Khuram Manzoor, Raheel Majeed, Asad Shafiq, Ali Asad, Ahmad Shahzad, Azhar Ali, Anwer Ali, Adil Raza, Mohammad Aamir, Azhar Ullah, Imad Waseem, Yasir Shah and Azhar Ali.

(Replacements for four-dayers): Sohail Khan, Wahab Riaz, Sarfaraz Ahmad, Fawad Alam.

Heera named Tigers' manager

SPORTS REPORTER

The Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) yesterday appointed former national cricket captain Shahequeul Huque Heera as national team operations manager for one year.

Heera, a National Sports Award winner in 1996, will begin his tenure as team operations manager with Bangladesh's Tour of Pakistan this month.

The 52-year-old ex-wicketkeeper Heera, who led the country in the 1979 and 1982 ICC Trophy tournaments, had been the Tigers manager during the 1988 Asia Cup in Dhaka, 1990 Australasia Cup in Sharjah, Bangladesh's home series against Pakistan in 2002 and Australia in 2006 and the tour of Zimbabwe and Kenya in 2006.

He was also the deputy director of development of BCB a national selector.

Old Dhaka hockey champs

SPORTS REPORTER

Old Dhaka Hockey Association came from a goal down to thrash Sipahi Para of Rajshahi 4-1 in the final and lift the Dhaka Bank Independence Day hockey title at the Maulana Bhasani National Hockey Stadium yesterday.

Rony, Habul, Faisal and Jimmy struck after the break for the winners after Rimon had given the Rajshahi outfit a 1-0 lead in the first half.

Mahbub Ehsan Rana of Old Dhaka was adjudged man of the match while his teammate Habul shared the highest scorers' award jointly with Rimon of Sipahi Para.

Bangladesh Hockey Federation president and Air Force Chief Air Marshall SM Ziaur Rahman distributed prizes as chief guest.

Real thump Sevilla

AFP, Madrid



Villarreal, 3-0 conquerors of Atletico Madrid, are in second place while Barcelona are a point further back in third.

Barca's 3-2 slip against Real Betis on Saturday presented Real with a perfect opportunity to take a giant step towards retaining their title and the champions grasped it with both hands.

"It was a complete game from my team from defence right through to the attack," said Real coach Bernd Schuster.

"Everyone played to their top level tonight and for that reason I don't want to single out individuals for praise."

"After the bad luck against

Valencia we have won an important game and we just have to continue what we are doing to win the title and not look back."

Gabriel Heinze's first league goal for Real put the hosts ahead as early as the seventh minute only for Frederic Kanoute to level the scores on 37 minutes.

However, captain Raul Gonzalez scored minutes later for his 290th Real goal to make him the club's joint second all-time top scorer along with Carlos Alonso Santillana and he is hunting Alfredo di Stefano's mark of 307.

Gonzalo Higuain added a third as Real ended a sequence of two successive league defeats.

Sevilla lost ground in their Champions League race and are five points behind Atletico and Racing Santander who are fourth and fifth respectively.

"It was an open game with both teams going for it," said Sevilla coach Manolo Jimenez. "Real had more chances than us, although we had opportunities ourselves, and I think the second goal was the key."

Unfashionable Racing continue

to dream of Champions League football after Sunday's 3-0 win at rivals Espanyol moved them level on points with fourth-placed Atletico.

"We are delighted with the win and above all how we won," said Racing coach Marcelino Garcia. "We have taken an important step but not a decisive one. We just have to concentrate on trying to win next Sunday's match."

After losing 3-2 at home to Valencia, Real were keen to put on a good show at the Santiago Bernabeu - recently confirmed as the venue for the 2010 Champions League final.

Pepe was injured on international duty with Portugal so Heinze moved into central defence.

Sevilla had a full-strength team with Brazilian striker Luis Fabiano, who has openly admitted that he would relish a summer move to Real, particularly keen to impress.

Real took a seventh minute lead with Wesley Sneijder's terrific set-piece bumbled in by Heinze.

Raul was twice denied by Andres

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Roma primed for MU test

REUTERS, Rome



AS Roma will be without injured captain Francesco Totti when they take on Manchester United in Tuesday's

Champions League quarterfinal first leg at the Stadio Olimpico.

The Serie A club said on Sunday that the striker needs rest because of a thigh muscle injury he felt after Saturday's 1-1 draw at Cagliari, when he scored his side's equalizer.

The loss of Roma's main creative force and their top scorer in Serie A this term with 14 goals is a big blow to Italy's sole Champions League survivor.

The hosts are also without suspended Italy midfielder Simone Perrotta, while Brazilian defender Juan is a doubt because of a foot problem.

United, the Premier League

leaders, are in fine fettle after thrashing Aston Villa 4-0 on Saturday with Cristiano Ronaldo inspirational again and scorer of a delightful back-heeled goal.

Wayne Rooney also scored twice to end a six-game run without a goal, leading manager Alex Ferguson to declare that his side have "reached a peak" and stir fears among Roma fans of a repetition of the 7-1 drubbing they suffered at Old Trafford at this stage last season having won the first leg 2-1.

Roma coach Luciano Spalletti, however, believes his side will show they have come a long way since that debacle.

"Games like this one against Manchester bring out the best in us," he told reporters. "We need to be careful and try not to concede but in order to do it we have to be strong and have total faith. We need to do everything and more."

Roma were a different prospect in the group-stage clashes between

the sides this season, when they were unlucky to lose 1-0 away and held United 1-1 in the Italian capital.

The 4-2 aggregate win over nine-time European champions Real Madrid in the first knockout round was further proof of growing maturity.

Spalletti can also take comfort from some solid recent displays by Montenegro forward Mirko Vucinic, who will be called on to lead the attack in Totti's absence.

United regulars Michael Carrick, Patrice Evra, Rio Ferdinand and Ryan Giggs came off with knocks against Villa, although Ferguson said he was hopeful they would be fit for Tuesday.

Goalkeeper Edwin van der Sar is a bigger worry after missing Saturday's game with a groin problem.

"Edwin van der Sar may be a doubt for Tuesday," Ferguson told the club's Web site (www.manutd.com).

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Old Dhaka Hockey Association players celebrate winning the Independence Day hockey title at the Maulana Bhasani National Hockey Stadium yesterday.

Canary Wharf football camp from Thursday

SPORTS REPORTER

The third year of the football coaching camp under the auspices of Canary Wharf, UK will begin at the BKSP on April 3.

The trainees have been requested to join the first-term camp on the same day and report to head coach Golam Sarwar Tipu or coordinator Fazlur Rahman Babu.

The project's British coach Anthony Ferguson and Anwaruddin, the only Bangladeshi footballer playing in the English professional league, are expected to visit the camp this month.

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