

BRAC BANK HOCKEY

Usha, Ajax winners

SPORTS REPORTER

Maksudul Alam Habul struck twice as Usha Kira Chakra raced to their second successive win with a 4-0 thrashing of Wari Club in the Brac Bank Club Cup hockey tournament at the Maulana Bhasani National Stadium yesterday.

A traditional powerhouse in the domestic hockey after Mohammedan and Abahani, Usha, who got off to a flier with a 5-0 success against Ajax SC, never looked behind after Zahidul Islam Rajon broke the evening's duck scoring a from a penalty corner in the 22nd minute.

They took a 2-0 lead just before the break with Moniruzzaman finding the target from another well directed penalty corner. The second-half saw two brilliant field goals from their star forward Maksudul Alam, who sealed the one-sided affair with strikes in the 42nd and 48th minutes respectively.

While Usha rolled past a hapless Wari, Ajax had to toil to tame Bangladesh SC-1 in the first game under scorching summer sun.

Ajax led the first-half by a solitary goal with Sharafat Ali hitting the board in the 26th minute. Rajib Ahmed made it 2-0 two minutes after the break before Bangladesh Sporting captain stepped up to convert a penalty stroke minutes before the final whistle.

Mumbai sweat on Tendulkar

CRICINFO, undated

Sachin Tendulkar has said he was not yet fully recovered from his groin injury, leaving him a doubtful starter for the Mumbai Indians' opening IPL match on April 20.

With just three days left for Mumbai's first match, Tendulkar said he was still following a rehabilitation regime and was not 100 per cent fit yet. "I am a little disappointed that I was not able to play in the two important matches against South Africa. I am yet to recover fully from the injury," he told reporters.

"The physiotherapist and the doctor had earlier advised me rest and now they have given me the exercises and I am following their advice."

The Bangalore franchise has also been hit with a few injury concerns.

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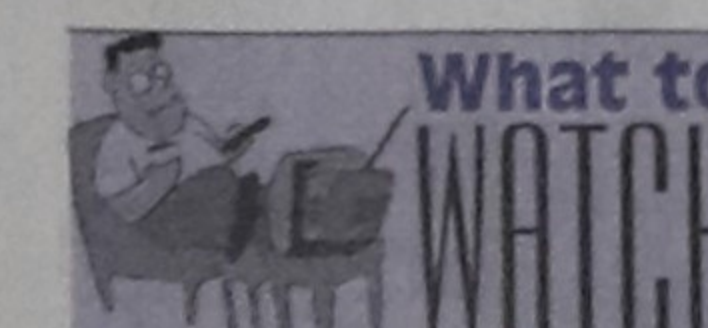
Did U Know?

Korball is the only sport played with mixed teams, consisting of 4 men and 4 women.



Peter Roebuck

(Revered English cricket writer) "His new leadership has shown itself to be spineless, amoral, unprincipled, shallow, self-centred, ill-informed and contemptible." How he sees the International Cricket Council office-bearers.



SET MAX

Indian Premier League
Bangalore Royal Challengers v
Kolkata Knight Riders
Live at 8:30 pm
ESPN
Sportscenter India
Sports News
Live at 8:30pm



Usha forward Zahidul Islam Rajon (L) is on the attack as Wari defender Farid closely marks him during their Brac Bank Club Cup hockey tournament at the Maulana Bhasani National Stadium yesterday.

Vision Bangladesh back

Football

SPORTS REPORTER

National Sports Council (NSC) chairman and Army Chief General Moeen U Ahmed asserted the importance of healthier grassroots in football to bring back the glory days of the game in the country.

He made this observation after Asian Football Confederation (AFC) general secretary Dato Paul Mony made a presentation on development programmes at the BFF Bhawan yesterday.

A three-member delegation led by Mony that included Vision Asia's project director Brendan Menton and AFC development officer Imtiaz Rehman, briefed Gen Moeen about Vision Asia, Grassroots and Youth, and Vision Bangladesh projects.

The presentation, which was first made in 2004, was made fol-

lowing the NSC chief's meeting with AFC president Mohammad Bin Hammam during the latter's visit to Bangladesh earlier this month.

"We must have coaches at school level so that children can learn from their mistakes early. As an under-developed country, we must also create job-oriented training for young footballers. We have to build multi-purpose grounds so people can take shelter during natural disasters like flood as well as the youth play sports," said the NSC chairman.

Gen Moeen admitted that maybe the current national team will not do better results right at the moment but in a decade's time, the results will start flowing through this grassroots project.

"I hope we will be able to reach the standard set by the AFC in 10 years. I know the Vision Bangladesh will not help our national team but certainly it's

going to develop at the grassroots.

"To regain our lost glory in football, we should try to develop at school level with help of this AFC programme," added Gen Moeen.

Later in the afternoon, Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) president SA Sultan admitted that his organisation failed to continue the programme.

"BFF takes full responsibility for failing to carry on such a beautiful project," said Sultan during a press briefing at the local football's headquarters where acting general secretary Manzoor Hossain Malu and the AFC delegation were also present.

The project has been shelved on FIFA-AFC directive to make amendments to the statute of the federation.

It was also revealed that FIFA and AFC have asked the BFF to employ a full-time general secretary, much like a CEO.

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National Sports Council chairman and Army Chief General Moeen U Ahmed (C) speaks after the 'Vision Bangladesh' presentation at the BFF Bhawan yesterday. Also seen in the picture are (R-L) Vision Asia project director Brendan Menton, Asian Football Confederation general secretary Dato Paul Mony, Bangladesh Football Federation president SA Sultan and acting BFF general secretary Manzoor Hossain Malu.

An all-star cast

Cricket

CRICINFO, undated

The high-profile Indian Premier League (IPL) finally kicks off after much fan fare and heaps of expectation. Six weeks, 59 matches, and plenty of glam await as Indian domestic cricket steps into the hitherto unknown. Cricinfo runs the rule over the eight franchises doing battle for the lucrative tournament title.

BANGALORE ROYAL CHALLENGERS

It's not the best of signs when a captain uses the word "uncertainty" three times in a sentence but Rahul Dravid still has plenty of options to choose from. A flurry of flip-flops ended with Jacques Kallis and Mark Boucher being allowed to stay back and Ashley Noffke may

turn into a good replacement for Nathan Bracken. Misbahul Haq and Abdur Razzak, the Bangladesh left-arm spinner, won't be part of the first game -- nor will the injured Anil Kumble -- but Bangalore still have a potent line-up to go all the way.

Cameron White arrives with 878 runs in 26 Twenty20 matches. A strike-rate of 160.80 suggests an explosive quality like few others in the league. He's also a handy leg-spinner and could well be the lynchpin.

CHENNAI SUPER KINGS

Without Makhaya Ntini and Albie Morkel (who will miss the first two games) the Chennai bowling looks a bit thin. They will now rely on Muthiah Muralitharan and Jacob Oram with the Indian domestic players -- Joginder Sharma, R Ashwin and Manpreet Gony -- to back them up. Mahendra Singh Dhoni is unlikely to keep early on,

with Parthiv Patel taking up the wicketkeeper's role, but the batting looks in fine shape with Matthew Hayden, Stephen Fleming, S Badrinath and Suresh Raina leading the charge. The South African duos arrival, though, will provide the side with plenty of balance.

Morkel, who will be available after two games, provides an explosive quality. With a strike-rate that approaches 130, he's made a name as one of the biggest hitters. A handy medium-pacer, he will also be useful in the death overs, keeping down the runs in the crunch.

DELHI DAREDEVILS

No Mohammad Asif, Shoaib Malik and AB de Villiers early on, no Daniel Vettori for the second half of the tournament -- but these remain the only hitches in what is likely to be a well-set squad. The only two Australians -- Glenn McGrath and

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It's IPL time

Captains to toss under spotlight



CRICINFO, undated

It will probably be for the first time in their lives that Rahul Dravid and Sourav Ganguly, former India captains and now rival skippers in the Indian Premier League (IPL), will walk out for the toss in a stadium plunged in darkness.

Minutes after a "short, sharp and sweet" opening ceremony on Friday to launch the inaugural edition of the Twenty20 tournament, the organisers are planning to switch off the floodlights at the Chinnaswamy Stadium before the first match between David's Bangalore Royal Challengers, the hosts, and Ganguly's Kolkata Knight Riders, the visitors, which begins at 20.00 local time. "Then, the spotlights will come on, and focus on the two skippers as they walk out for the toss," Charu Sharma, the Royal Challengers' chief executive, told Cricinfo.

"We are pushing to have the toss

under spotlights and are waiting for permission from local authorities, considering the number of people who will be there at the stadium when the lights will be switched off. This is something that has not really been tried before," he said.

After the toss, a couple of players from the fielding side will be "miked up" to chat directly with the TV commentators during the match. "Another attraction for the TV audience, but this has been done before, I guess," Sharma said.

However, the "most poignant moment" of the 45-minute opening ceremony starting 18.30, Sharma said, would be when all the captains gather mid-pitch to jointly read out a pledge reaffirming the IPL's faith in the spirit of cricket. "There will also be speeches by Ray Mali, the ICC president, Sharad Pawar, the BCCI president, and Lalit Modi, the IPL chairman."

The rest of the ceremony will be a "slick" blend of fireworks, stilt walkers, aerial gymnasts, performers in a bubble suspended over the ground and some Bollywood glitter with the presence Shah Rukh Khan, also the co-owner of the Kolkata

team, and Preity Zinta, co-owner of the Mohali franchise. "Shankar-Ehsan-Loy (the Bollywood music directors) will be the central performers who will keep the crowd enthralled throughout the ceremony even as the other performers go through their acts," Sharma said.

Bangalore is also banking on 12 cheerleaders from the Washington Redskins, the 'First Ladies of American Football', to draw more fans to the stadium. "The entire exercise is to have the right balance of glamour and cricket. Usually, cricket is not associated with such ceremonies, and this will be a novelty. At the same time, we would not want the genuine cricket fan to get frustrated waiting for the game to start. Our aim is to present a spectacle that's short, sharp and sweet, which reflects the spirit of the IPL," Sharma said.

Bangalore Royal Challengers, which is owned by Vijay Malaya, the business tycoon, is playing a key role in organising the opening ceremony on their home ground in association with the Karnataka State Cricket Association and the IPL.

PCA book final berth

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Pakistan Cricket Academy completed

their job to secure a place in the final of the tri-nation Graameenphone Academy Cup tournament when they easily outclassed South Africa Cricket Academy by 85 runs at the Chittagong Divisional Stadium here yesterday.

Two consecutive defeats in as many matches, on the other hand, pushed the Proteas youngsters in such a position from where their chances to stay now looked very much improbable.

Electing to bat first Pakistan scored a defendable 240 for six in their stipulated 50 overs with the help of two half-centuries from man-of-the-match Ahmad Shehzad (74 runs off 81 balls) and Khalid Latif (51 runs off 81 balls).

Shehzad, who scored only 18 against Bangladesh on Wednesday, showed his class and fluency of strokeplay yesterday. He hit 13 fours to all corners of the field. Latif, who played an impressive innings of 84 against the host team, added another nicely composed 51 to his name with the help of five fours and one mighty six.

Khurram Manzoor, another half-century of the first match, scored 12 followed by Asad Shafiq (18), Azhar Ali (23), Ali Asad (28*), Anwar Ali (10) and Imdad Wasim (14*).

But the real feature of the play was the build up of few steady but mediocre partnerships between the Pakistani players that eventually guaranteed the final score more

than enough for the South Africans. The stands were 60 (second wicket), 47 (first), 45 (third) and 35 (seventh).

Chasing a score in excess of 200 against a team like Pakistan was not all that easy and the South African players experienced the reality pinch in doing so, regardless of their relatively promising start.

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Ahmad Shehzad sweeps one out on way to scoring a stroke-filled 74 against South Africa Academy during their tri-nation tournament match at the Chittagong Divisional Stadium yesterday.

Arrest mars torch relay

AFP, New Delhi

Hundreds of Tibetan demonstrators were arrested in India and neighbouring Nepal Thursday as thousands of police and soldiers defended the Beijing Olympic torch on a suffocating run through New Delhi.

The heart of the Indian capital was sealed off for the most sensitive leg of the protest-hit global relay to date, with security personnel far outnumbering the schoolboys and the other few select onlookers allowed to watch.

India is home to 100,000 Tibetan refugees, including the Dalai Lama and radical youth groups, and authorities wanted to ensure that

chaotic protests like those seen in Paris and London did not mar the event.

The scaled-back 2.3-kilometre (1.5-mile) relay lasted little more than 30 minutes, and there were no disruptions to the event itself.

Relay participants were tightly marshalled by tracksuited Chinese security guards, and allowed to run a few metres each.

An estimated 16,000 police, soldiers and even elite commandos were deployed to throw up a huge security cordon around the central thoroughfare between the presidential palace and India Gate, two of New Delhi's main landmarks.

"We have around 170 to 180 people in custody," a senior police official told AFP after a day marked by a string of protests and shrouded in a fortress-like atmosphere featuring tracker dogs, bomb disposal units and metal detectors.

The Tibetan Youth Congress, a radical activist group that spearheaded attempts to disrupt the event, gave a similar figure on the number of demonstrators taken in by police throughout the day.

They said among those arrested were a group of around 70 protesters who tried to make a run for the area where the torch relay began. Another activist, Tibetan poet Tenzin Tsundue, told AFP that several of those detained had suffered injuries.

Another 46 Tibetans were arrested in India's financial capital Mumbai as they tried to storm the Chinese consulate, police in the city said.

In neighbouring Nepal, police said they had arrested more than 500 Tibetan refugees as they protested outside the Chinese embassy, the most rounded up

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Indian hockey star Dhanraj Pillay (L) lights the Beijing Olympic torch from Bollywood star Saif Ali Khan during the torch relay in New Delhi on Thursday. Unfortunately for Bangladesh the torch relay is not coming here as the International Olympic Committee fixed its route on the basis of number of participants.