

Fine start for DCA

SPORTS REPORTER

Dhanmondi Cricket Academy (DCA) got off to a winning start in the Second Division Cricket League after they beat Kalabagan Cricket Academy (KCA) by 40 runs at the City Club ground yesterday.

Mohsin Ali performed with both bat and ball as his 28 was crucial in DCA's modest score of 147 made in 39.3 overs.

Later, his leg-spin snared three wickets, as KCA were bundled out for only 107 runs in 38.2 overs. Rezaul took two wickets while Mahmudul Hasan of KCA scored 27 runs.

In the other match of the day, Mirpur Cricket Club (186-7 in 35 overs) posted an easy 47-run victory over Rajshahi's Al-Rashid Cricket Club (139-10 in 31 overs) in a rain-reduced match. For Mirpur, Asad took four wickets and scored 31 runs.

Locals demand better facilities

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Manikganj

A month-long cricket training programme, organised by the district sports office, concluded on Wednesday.

A total of 30 children, who participated in the training under Sayeed Khan Mazlish, Shahidul Haque Khokon and Sarker Mohammad Masud, were given certificates in a simple ceremony at the Manikganj Government High School playground.

But players, coaches, organisers have voiced their dissatisfaction over the inadequate facilities for cricket in Manikganj. They said that there are no cricket grounds in the town and that hampers opportunity of playing for the locals.

They demanded 5-6 nets, mats and concrete pitches so that practice can be held smoothly.

Police superintendent Sheikh Muhammad Maruf Hasan, chief guest, said, "There is no alternative of training children need involvement in sports and culture besides their education."

Windies not coming to Pakistan

CRICINFO, undated

The Pakistan Cricket Board's (PCB) effort to host a home series received another jolt with the West Indies turning down an invitation to play a one-day series later in the year.

After being rejected by Australia, India and Sri Lanka for security reasons and scheduling problems, the PCB has now been told by the West Indies Cricket Board (WICB) that they can't undertake a tour in August due to prior engagements.

The PCB had invited West Indies and New Zealand to play a three-match ODI series in August to give its team some practice before the Champions Trophy in September. This would have also helped the PCB recover from the financial setback suffered due to the postponement of Australia's tour in March. Bangladesh are currently in the country for a five-match ODI series and a Twenty20 international to cover for Australia's pull-out.

"Yes, the West Indies board has informed us that since they are already committed to play some games in Canada in August, they can't accept our invitation," Shaqat Nagmi, the PCB's chief operating officer, said. "We have sent a fresh invitation to New Zealand asking them to come and play a full five-match one-day series instead of three ODIs. We are awaiting a reply from them."

IPL gets off with a bang

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"The world is watching what is happening in Bangalore.

In 44 days, 123 Indian players and 73 overseas players are going to play 59 matches in eight different places.

"I am confident there is an opportunity for the world's senior players to teach the new young players which will build a strong future team for India."

Acting International Cricket Council president Ray Mali thanked the Bangalore organisers and said cricket "was being taken to the next level."

IPL commissioner Lalit Modi, vice-president of the BCCI, said: "We will be treated to some of the most exciting sport this country has ever seen."

"There has never been a more talked about sports event in India and the eyes of the world are on us."

The contests between eight teams will feature nearly all of the top names in the game. And they will be closely watched in England, the birthplace of Twenty20 cricket.

The England and Wales Cricket Board is in talks with an American billionaire to set up its own version of the IPL, but on Friday the attention is squarely on India.

The match between Dravid's Bangalore Royal Challengers, and Ganguly's Knight Riders sets the six-week tournament in motion.

With the final in Mumbai on June 1, fans should see some mouthwatering cricket with the likes of Sachin Tendulkar



Swiss world number one Roger Federer makes a forehand return against Romanian Victor Hanesescu during the Estoril Open in Lisbon on Thursday.

Federer reaches quarters

Tennis

AFP, Estoril

World number one Roger Federer breezed through irritating showers to shrug off Romania's Victor Hanesescu 6-3, 6-2 and reach the Estoril Open quarter-finals on Thursday.

With conditions at their worst, the top seed needed just 59 minutes to dispatch the world number 68 in the claycourt event.

"It was rainy throughout the match, that's always a hard thing," said 12-time Grand Slam champion Federer.

"The balls have a very dead feel, the kick serve is non-existent. You have to play in a different way. Victor had a hard time today, he struggled to hit winners and I didn't make too many mistakes."

"I played offensive and he didn't know what to do. It was a good match. I'm very happy but it's not a match to over-rate. It was a solid performance though."

Federer, playing this low-key event for the first time as he pre-

pares for a new assault on the French Open, the only Grand Slam title to elude him, was watched by his new coaching brains trusted headed by Spain's Jose Higueras and Swiss Davis Cup coach Severin Luethi.

Federer is hoping to lift his first title of a troubled season having seen his start to 2008 overshadowed by a battle with glandular fever.

He has Higueras, who coached Michael Chang and Jim Courier to Roland Garros titles, on trial this week to see how the arrangement might work.

"Usually you start with a coach during practice week," said the Swiss. "We started during a tournament."

"My practise weeks are in December, January and February. Here, there is a match always around the corner."

"It's a bit harder but so far so good. I'm happy the way it's going and we'll see what happens in the future."

The world number one took an early lead in Thursday's drizzle, advancing to 3-1 in the

opening set at the Estadio Nacional.

Federer clinched the opening set in half an hour with a service winner, then showed he was hoping for a quick afternoon by breaking to start the second set.

The Swiss, who next faces either Joao Sousa or Federico Gil, both of Portugal, reached a comfortable 4-0 lead and moved into a winning position with three match points in the eighth game.

But Hanesescu had other plans, saving all three and forcing the Swiss to fire his third ace on a fourth opportunity to get the job done.

In other second-round matches, Czech Jiri Vanek defeated German eighth seed Michael Berrer 6-3, 3-6, 7-5 while Denis Gremelmayr took a win for Germany over Russian Teimuraz Gabashvili 7-6 (8/6), 6-1.

Women's second seed Maria Kirilenko, reached the last eight with a defeat of Czech Petra Cetkovska 6-3, 6-2 while Ukrainian Olga Savchuk put out Sweden's seventh seed Sofia Arvidsson 6-2, 6-2.

Maria books Serena clash

Tennis

AFP, Charleston

Maria Sharapova, enjoying a sparkling season so far, will test herself against an old foe in Serena Williams in the quarter-finals of the Family Circle Cup.

Sharapova, ranked No.4 in the world and seeded second, defeated unseeded Tatiana Perebiynis 7-5, 6-2.

Williams, the fifth seed, defeated Katarina Srebotnik of Slovenia, 4-6, 6-4, 6-3.

Sharapova has stormed through the early stages of 2008, going 23-1 with three titles, including the Australian Open.

However, the Russian has struggled against Williams, losing each of the last three meetings and four

of six overall.

Williams claimed both matchups last year, including a showdown in the championship match in Melbourne.

Yet, Sharapova has shown that she has grown as a player, picking up her first clay title at Amelia Island on Sunday.

She also started strong at this green clay event on Wednesday, crushing American Bethanie Mattek 6-0, 6-0.

Sharapova also could benefit from the fact that Williams may be hurting for the quarter-finals. The American tumbled to the clay court after turning her right ankle in the second set against Srebotnik.

"I just hope it's nothing that bothers me tomorrow," Williams said. "When the adrenaline is going sometimes you don't realize how

bad something hurts until the next day."

On the other side of the draw, top seed and defending champion Jelena Jankovic needed just 52 minutes to defeat Russian Anastasia Rodionova 6-0, 6-2.

Seeking her first title of the season, Jankovic will face ninth seed Vera Zvonareva of Russia in the quarter-finals. Zvonareva advanced with 6-4, 4-6, 6-1 victory over sixth-seeded Frenchwoman Marion Bartoli.

Fourth-seeded Elena Dementieva of Russia beat Victoria Azarenka 6-4, 7-5 and will meet seventh seed Patty Schnyder a 6-3, 6-2 winner over Poland's Agnieszka Radwanska.

Hungary's Agnes Szavay and Alize Cornet of France complete the quarter-final lineup.

ence for the fans.

BBC cricket correspondent Jonathan Agnew said: "The success or failure of the IPL lies with the Indian supporters who are fanatical about cricket but only until now about the national team."

"If a supporter of the Punjab franchise celebrates wildly when Lee Shatters Tendulkar's stumps in Mumbai for a duck then the IPL will have broken new territory."

One dampener is that there are some notable absentees for the first few matches.

Star names Tendulkar, Anil Kumble and Nathan Bracken are injured and out of the opening exchanges.

The most exciting fast bowler around, South Africa's Dale Steyn, is playing domestic cricket for the Titans back home and will also miss the start.

Meanwhile, England's only representative, Dimitri Mascarenhas, will only be released from Hampshire duty for a fortnight some time in May.

The IPL may be a vivid symbol of the new wealth in India.

But one team owner, Bollywood superstar Shahrukh Khan, has admitted to having "sleepless nights" about how the League might pan out.

Another aggrieved party is the editor of the Cricinfo website, Sambit Bal.

His journalists have been barred from entering the press box, and agencies will not be able to sell them match pictures.

Bal wrote in an editorial: "The IPL's outrageous regulations are a brazen assault on the concept of freedom of the press by a sports body apparently drunk on its sense of power."

The Federation of International Cricketers' Associations also has concerns of a different nature.

It has begun investigating how many players have not received their initial IPL fees and has warned if the problem is widespread they could walk away from their contracts.

David Hussey, who sold for \$25,000 dollars in February, is one of the Australians who has not received the 15 per cent payment for their auction price, which was reportedly due on April 1.

"It's been an absolute nightmare in terms of the paperwork required to get the players there," Hussey's manager Rick Olarenshaw told the Age.

TEAMS

BANGALORE: Praveen Kumar, Wasim Jaffer, Jacques Kallis, Rahul Dravid (captain), Virat Kohli, Cameron White, B Akhil, Mark Boucher (wk), Zaheer Khan, Ashley Noffke, Sunil Joshi.

KOLKATA: Brendon McCullum (wk), Sourav Ganguly (captain), Ricky Ponting, David Hussey, Debabrata Das, Mohammad Hafeez, Laxmi Ratan Shukla, Ajit Agarkar, Murali Kartik, Ishant Sharma, Wriddhiman Saha.

LOCAL SNIPPETS

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh Rifles beat East End Boys Club 3-0 in the inaugural match of the Premier Division Volleyball League that began at the Volleyball Stadium yesterday.

Bangladesh Volleyball Federation vice-president Morshed A Chowdhury formally inaugurated the meet as chief guest.

In today's matches, Titus Gas face Sonali Bank, Water Development Board take on Fire Services Sports Club and Power Development Board are up against Wari Club.

MANIKGANJ CRICKET

Our Correspondent: A four-wicket victory over Victoria in the semi-finals gave Dashara Palli Mangal Samity (DPMS) a place in the final of the Col Malek Smriti First Division Cricket League at the Shaheed Miraz-Tapan Stadium here yesterday.

Battling first, Victoria were skittled out for only 86 runs in 26.5 overs. Lal took four wickets while Obaidur snared three as well. Lal also top-scored for DPMS, as they reached their target in 19.1 overs.

NATIONAL CAROM

UNB adds: Farhana Banu Shilpi and Farhana Priti of Friends Dramatic Club clinched the women's doubles crown of the 5th National Carom Championship beating Farzana Akhter and Afsana Nasreen of Eden Girls College in the final at the NSG Gymnasium.

The mixed doubles title went to Manirul Haque and Shamsun Nahar Maksuda of Dhaka who beat Farhana Nasreen Lipi and Salahuddin.

The men's singles and women's singles finals will be held today, the last day of the three-day meet.

Shoaib to file fresh appeal

CRICINFO, undated

Shoaib Akhtar has been allowed to file a fresh appeal by the appellate tribunal conducting his hearing against the five-year ban imposed on him after his lawyer said he hadn't received some documents from the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB).

The three-man tribunal, headed by retired High Court judge Aftab Farukh and including former Test player Haseeb Ahsan and former federal minister Saleem Taseer, held its first meeting on the appeal on April 17 but adjourned after 45 minutes when Shoaib's lawyer contended the PCB hadn't provided them with all the documents regarding the matter.

The hearings will now resume on April 26 but Farukh didn't mention any date for the providing a verdict. "I can't give a date on when we can reach a judgment."

Tigers fined

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imposed the fine after Mohammad Ashraful's side was ruled to be one over short of its target.

Ashraful was fined 10 per cent of his match fee while each of his players received five per cent fines.

In a separate incident, Shahriar was found to have breached clause 1.2 of the ICC Code of Conduct which relates to "abuse of cricket equipment or clothing, ground equipment or fixtures and fittings."

The incident took place in the 21st over of Pakistan's innings when, after misfielding, Shahriar kicked and damaged an advertising hoarding.

The opener, who got a duck in Bangladesh's 23-run defeat, pleaded guilty at the hearing.

"It was Shahriar's third misfield in the innings and he was obviously frustrated as it was a crucial game because Bangladesh was playing to stay alive in the series," said Procter.

"But it is not the sort of example that players should be setting at any time. Shahriar pleaded guilty, apologised for the incident and promised not to repeat it again."

The fifth and final ODI takes place in Karachi on Saturday with a one-off Twenty20 international taking place at the same venue on Sunday.

Media to boycott

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agencies boycotted coverage of the first Test between Sri Lanka and Australia in Brisbane, after Cricket Australia imposed similar restrictions.

A compromise was reached after the match to allow the agencies to cover the second Test in Hobart.

Dare fix

FROM PAGE 17

well as veteran coach Osman Gani to watch the match. Four cameras will also be deployed at the ground, he added.

The Super League match between Azad Sporting Club and Bangladesh Boys has also come under scrutiny after it was learned that the match referee had reported the game to be suspicious.

'Cricket needs IPL'

CRICINFO, undated

Ricky Ponting, the Australia captain, fears for the future of international cricket if administrators don't carve out a six-week window for the Indian Premier League. The tournament opens in Bangalore on Friday and while the cricket world is waiting to see how big it will be, Ponting is concerned about how it could influence players.

"If they don't [have an international window], I fear for the long-term impact that it will have on the game," Ponting wrote in the Australian. "Much has been said about the veterans coming to the end of their careers, but what about those players just starting out?"

"I think it's vital that we have a six-week period carved out of every international team's program because the money being thrown around becomes very appealing to young kids coming into the game."

Ponting expressed concern that players might choose the lucrative Twenty20 league over national duties. "Seeing the big dollars there

and having the chance to take that and turn your back on international cricket is the biggest danger that will be posed out of this event," Ponting said. "For those young guys starting out who haven't had a taste of international cricket, they might not want to put themselves through the rigours of travelling the world for the next 15 years."

"And the guys at the end of their careers have family at home and it's getting harder and harder for them to go away on tours every year. For them, they could make the equivalent amount of money in only seven weeks."

Ponting highlighted the exodus faced by countries such as New Zealand, with key players like Shane Bond having joined the unsanctioned Indian Cricket League. "I know it has lost a couple of its bigger and better players because of the difference in pay playing for New Zealand," Ponting said. "The Kiwis' IPL contracts are probably four times the value of their international contract."

"That's where the dangers are.

You would hate to see a situation where New Zealand is no longer playing international cricket because it has no players."

John Buchanan, the former Australia coach who is with the Kolkata Knight Riders, expressed similar concerns in the Sydney Morning Herald. He said cricket needed to sort out its finances and the likes of Allen Stanford, the Texan billionaire hoping to revive West Indies cricket, should be welcomed.

"With the exception of Australia, England and India, every country in world cricket is struggling to pay their players sufficiently," he said. "For example, we have Brendon McCullum with us, and there's no way New Zealand Cricket could be paying him in a day what the IPL is."

"But there shouldn't be any debate in terms of him playing for his country. That is of utmost importance. But administrators should allow the IPL to subsidise his income with New Zealand Cricket."

'Lure not disloyalty'

Cricket

AFP, London

Kevin Pietersen has insisted England players' interest in appearing in the Indian Premier League is not a sign of disloyalty but something "anyone in their right mind" would consider seriously.

It has been reported that Pietersen, the most gifted batsman currently in the England side, was offered a seven-figure sum to take part in the inaugural IPL, a domestic Twenty20 tournament in India, which starts on Friday.

But all centrally-contracted England players have been barred from this year's edition because the IPL clashes with both the start of the English domestic and home international seasons.

England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) chairman Giles Clarke has also expressed reservations about centrally contracted players featuring in next year's IPL and running the risk of injury ahead of the 2009 Ashes.

Pietersen, who has previously labelled talk of a ban on the involvement of England players in the IPL as "ridiculous", said Thursday: "I don't see anything wrong with saying we want to go and play and earn that kind of money."

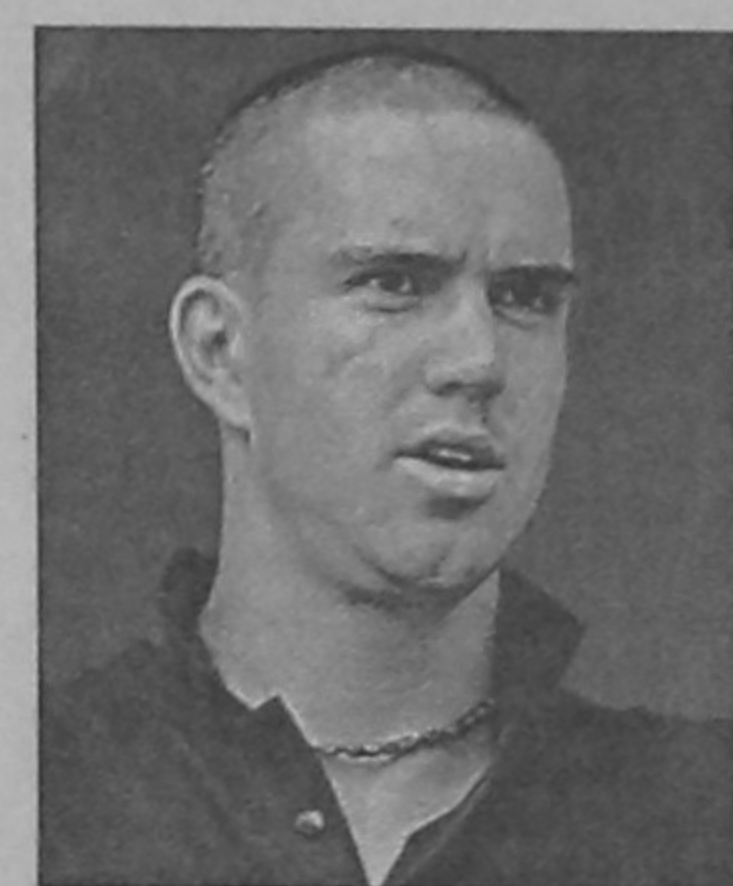
"People who nail us for it are not going to pay for my child's school fees in 15 years' time."

"You have to look after yourself because you are not going to be

playing cricket when you are 50 or 60."

"To be offered the kind of money I have been offered, it is ridiculous for someone to abuse you about it. It is like winning the lottery and anybody in their right mind would go for it," added Pietersen.

South Africa-born Pietersen, 27, who averages nearly 50 in his 36



KEVIN PIETERSEN

Tests, made it clear he had no intention of sacrificing his England career for the lure of the Rajasthan Royals or the Kolkata Knight Riders.

But he said there were sound cricketing reasons for England players, whose commercial worth has been established by their performances in international cricket, to participate in the IPL.

"The best players in the world will be honing their skills for the next six weeks," Pietersen added.

"It will increase the scores in one-dayers and it will make players

make a few more shots in Test too."

English officials have responded to players' IPL concerns by talking to Texan billionaire Allen Stanford, the man behind the West Indies' domestic Twenty20 competition which has proved popular in the Caribbean.

England tour the West Indies next year and there is a possibility of a 10 million pounds (20 million dollars) winner-takes-all Twenty20 match against a local All-Stars side.

"I hope I get selected," Pietersen said. "It is very exciting because money like that hasn't been talked about in cricket before."

"For a one-off fixture, to know you could come home with the best part of a million in your pocket, it's amazing."

An increasingly congested international programme means fewer and fewer top-class overseas players are now able to spend a full season with an English county as was the widespread case in the 1970s and 1980s.

Pietersen said the IPL would make county cricket even less attractive for cricketers' top stars.

"The guys are going to get so much money from the IPL," he said.

"Why would a fast bowler want to come and play in England, tour up and down the country for six months, play in everything that he has to, and have the pressure that he is under, to earn 70 grand (thousand pounds), when he could play in India for six weeks and earn 500 grand?"

"It just doesn't make sense to me."

Freddie bowls for long

Cricket

AFP, London

Andrew Flintoff's bid to be fit in time for next month's first Test against New Zealand at Lord's received a boost Thursday as the England all-rounder got through 28 overs for Lancashire in the first innings of their County Championship opener against Surrey at The Oval.

During the close season Flintoff underwent a fourth operation on a troublesome left ankle that has not always been able to stand the strain of his all-action approach to fast bowling.

It is still to be seen how the joint reacts after such a lengthy stint but the fact Flintoff took one for 72 in 28 overs, as the hosts piled up 537 for five declared while operating at a lively pace, impressed Mark Butcher, the Surrey captain.

"He seemed to be coming through quite nicely," said the left-

hander whose 120 was one of three centuries in Surrey's innings all made by former England Test batsmen.

"He's obviously a quality bowler, who goes at two an over



ANDREW FLINTOFF

pretty much in any cricket he plays in and is always asking questions."

"Provided he comes through with no ill effects he won't be far away with another couple of games

under his belt."

Lancashire coach Mike Watkins said of Flintoff: "He's had first days, second days and third days before because that is the way we have structured his comeback, making him bowl on consecutive days."

"We knew he was capable of doing what he has done in this match, he has bowled well and he's feeling fine."

Earlier Thursday, on the second day of this four-day match, Mark Ramprakash extended his 98th first-class hundred to 118 while Usman Afzaal, who played three Tests for England in 2001 against Australia, marked his Surrey debut with 134 not out.

Afzaal, who began his county career with Nottinghamshire, joined Surrey from Northamptonshire and Butcher said of the 30-year-old: "I don't think I have seen him bat at the Oval without him getting a hundred," said Butcher. "He's a great player and we're very pleased to have him."

IPL launches its website

Cricket

CRICINFO, undated

The