

Nat'l chess on

SPORTS REPORTER

The final phase of the 34th National Chess Championship got underway at the federation hall-room yesterday.

Reigning champion GM Abdullah Al Rakib, IM Enamul Hossain Rajib, GM Ziaur Rahman, FM Abu Sufian Shakil and Monir Hossain won their respective first round games.

A total of 14 players are taking part in the round-robin league.

In the day's round, Rakib won against FM Mohammad Javed, Rajib beat FM Abdul Malek, Zia beat FM Syed Mahfuzur Rahman Emon, Shakil beat Sohel Chowdhury, Monir beat FM Sheikh Nasir Ahmed, GM Reesat Bin Sattar drew his board with FM Minhaszuddin Ahmed Sagar and GM Niaz Mursheed drew with Debaraj Chatterjee.

Setara passes away

SPORTS REPORTER

Setara Begum, the national award-winning swimmer, breathed her last in BIRDEM hospital last evening.

She had admitted to hospital four months back with complications of kidney illness and for last few days she was kept in ICU following a brain stroke.

She was buried in her village in Kashipur under Narayanganj district.

Setara got the national award in 2005 for her tremendous success in the national competitions from 1975 to 1985. She secured 105 medals including some long distance records during her ten-year tenure as a swimmer.

She became champions in 50m and 100m freestyle and backstroke from 1975 to 1977.

Bangladesh Olympic Association (BOA) condoled her death and expressed their deepest sympathy to her family members.

Kolkata win

FROM PAGE 17

the other end struggled to push the scoring but cut loose in the 17th over, clattering two sixes over midwicket off David Hussey, who had the last laugh when he hung on to a skier to get rid of Symonds as the innings folded up in the 19th over.

While one would have expected Kolkata to approach the chase with caution, Brendon McCullum was having nothing of it. Taking guard like a gladiator preparing for a duel in Rome's Colosseum, with a golden helmet to boot, he walked across his stumps off the first ball and whopped Chaminda Vaas down fine leg. However, following his masterclass, unbeaten 158 in Bangalore, he learnt a harsh lesson in humility after falling rather tamely for 5, lobbing a leading edge straight to Rohit Sharma at point and the crowd were suddenly silenced.

A double-strike by Vaas sent back Ricky Ponting and Wriddhiman Saha, though Ponting could be consider himself a tad unlucky, with replays indicating the ball sailing over the stumps.

At 21 for 3, it was game on and the pitch didn't show any signs of easing up. Ganguly, like his opponent number Laxman, was the victim of a real snorter off Vaas that struck him flush on the chest. Styris appeared most lethal off the pitch, rolling his fingers, getting it to turn square and kick up.

The pressure was on as Laxman packed the infield to cut off the singles. Ganguly felt the heat as almost every soft push was intercepted by the fielders and even as he shaped to drive through the line, the pitch would send the ball darting in another direction. At one stage, Kolkata were living off wides alone as the surface left very little margin for error even for the bowlers.

After pushing and prodding for his 14, Ganguly finally departed trying to slog the left-arm spinner Pragyan Ojha. His partner Hussey bravely defied the bowling at the other end, making room and carrying Sanjay Bangar over extra cover for six and Mohammad Hafeez too eased the pressure, lauching Symonds over long-on. Just when Kolkata had a partnership going, Hafeez fell to a moment of indiscretion, reverse-sweeping Ojha to Symonds at cover just before the lights went out. The scores were freakishly tied at that stage on Duckworth/Lewis and had no play been possible, we would have witnessed a bowl-out. The lights eventually came back on and Hussey saluted the din at the Eden Gardens with an unbeaten 38. Kolkata silently would have thanked an invisible figure called Extras, which contributed 28 to the chase, also the second-highest top scorer.

SCORES IN BRIEF

DECCAN CHARGERS: 110 all out in 18.4 overs (Gilchrist 23, Venugopal 14, Symonds 32, Styris 6, Yadav 10, Bangar 14; M Kartik 3-17, Agarkar 2-19, I Sharma 1-9, Hafeez 1-8, Dinda 1-18)

KOLKATA KNIGHT RIDERS: 112 for 5 in 19 overs (Saha 10, McCullum 5, Ponting, 0, Ganguly 14, D Hussey not out 38, Hafeez 13, Shukla not out 4, extras 28; Vaas 2-9, Ojha 2-18, RP Singh 1-15)

Result: Kolkata Knight Riders won by 5 wickets.

Man-of-the-match: David Hussey. Toss: Deccan Chargers.

Umpires: Billy Bowden and Krishna Hariharan.



PHOTO: STAR
Mohammedan forward Ariful Haque Prince (L) scores his second goal against Mariner Youngs during their Brac Bank Club Cup hockey tournament clash at the Moulana Bhasani National Hockey Stadium yesterday.

Serena reaches final

Tennis

AFP, Charlotte

Former world number one Serena Williams moved a step closer to a third straight WTA Tour title here Saturday with a semifinal victory at the Family Circle Cup.

Williams, the fifth seed, defeated unseeded Frenchwoman Alize Cornet 7-5, 6-3 to reach the title match at the 1.3 million-dollar claycourt tournament.

Currently ranked ninth in the world, Williams has won 14 consecutive matches, including back-to-back titles in Bangalore and Miami.

Her ranking is expected to rise to sixth if she can claim her 31st career championship Sunday.

"I'm just trying to take it one

tournament at a time right now," Williams said when asked about cracking the top five again.

"Staying healthy and playing well is my focus. I'm not thinking about rankings, I'm thinking about titles."

Williams' opponent on Sunday will be Russian Vera Zvonareva, who defeated her fourth-seeded compatriot Elena Dementieva 6-3, 6-7 (2/7), 6-3.

Zvonareva, 23, claimed her first victory over 26-year-old Dementieva, who had won both of their previous encounters.

Zvonareva, who advanced from the quarterfinals with an upset of top seed and defending champion Jelena Jankovic of Serbia, will be trying to improve on her two runner-up finishes to date this season.

Now 18-1, Williams already is

building a strong resume this season.

On Friday, she posted an impressive 7-5, 4-6, 6-1 quarterfinal victory over fourth-ranked Maria Sharapova, who lost for just the second time in 26 matches this season.

Williams, 26, improved to 4-1 against top-four players with the win, including a thorough 6-2, 6-0 thrashing of top-ranked Justine Henin in the Miami quarterfinals.

Though not at Williams' level, the 40th-ranked Cornet has played some of her best tennis on the green clay in America.

The 18-year-old also reached the semifinals at Amelia Island last weekend, and her victory over Hungarian Agnes Szavay in Friday's quarterfinal marked her maiden over of the tournament, and from Delhi never let the initiative slip.

Rajasthan did their cause no favours with two run-outs, which

Not even the Yankees' 1/10th!

PTI, New Delhi

The hype and hoopla over Twenty20 cricket's Indian Premier League (IPL) notwithstanding, its most valued Mumbai team, owned by the country's richest person Mukesh Ambani, is not even one-tenth the value of top American baseball team New York Yankees.

According to a new list of the 30 Major League Baseball teams, published in a special edition of business magazine Forbes and ranked on the basis of their valuation, New York Yankees are currently valued at 1.306 billion dollars.

In comparison, all the eight IPL teams, currently fighting for the league's first ever trophy in India, together carry a value tag of just about half this figure at 723.7 million dollars.

Besides, even the most valued IPL team carries a value less than the least valued of the 30 MLB teams.

Mumbai Indians, which is owned by billionaire Mukesh Ambani who runs the country's most valued corporate house, is valued at 111.9 million dollars -- greater than any other team of the league.

It is closely followed by Bangalore Royal Challengers, owned by another billionaire businessman Vijay Mallya, with a team value of 111.6 million dollars, while Hyderabad Deccan Chargers -- owned by media house Deccan Chronicle -- is the only other IPL team with a valuation of over 100 million dollar.

In comparison, the least valued among all the 30 teams of MLB -- which operates North America's two topmost professional baseball leagues, the National League and the American League -- has a value of 256 million dollars.

However, New York Yankees is the only team currently valued at over one billion dollar, according to Forbes list.

Rajasthan did their cause no favours with two run-outs, which

Delhi do it easily



CRICINFO, undated

After two first-innings totals which had gone in excess of 200, the bowlers at last had their say at the Feroz Shah Kotla, as Delhi Daredevils thrashed Rajasthan Royals by nine wickets in a disappointing one-sided game in the Indian Premier League on Saturday.

Rajasthan didn't have a chance after their batsmen had floundered badly, putting up a dismal 129 on the board. Gautam Gambhir's unbeaten 58, and his 112-run partnership with Shikhar Dhawan -- who helped himself to a half-century as well -- finished off the run-chase in a mere 15.1 overs.

The only bid that went right for Rajasthan was the toss, which Shane Warne, their captain, won and had little hesitation in choosing to bat. When Tarun Kohli survived five deliveries from Glenn McGrath in the corridor and spanked the sixth one over cover point for six, it seemed the run-fest had started all over again. As it turned out, Rajasthan had little to celebrate thereafter. In his next over, Kohli chased his arm again against McGrath, but only found Mithun Manhas at midwicket. McGrath went on to bowl the first maiden over of the tournament, and from Delhi never let the initiative slip.

Rajasthan did their cause no favours with two run-outs, which

severely hampered their momentum. Shane Watson hinted at carrying on the good work that his fellow Australians had managed earlier in the day in Mohali, pulling McGrath and Brett Geeves for fours, but his resistance was ended swiftly following a misunderstanding with Mohammad Kaif. Yusuf Pathan had already fallen to the run-out route earlier, and when Kaif, who struggled to find the gaps and the runs, scooped to find the gaps and the runs, rapped a quick one which rattled the stumps off the pads.

Nothing could stop Gambhir, though, as he continued the Twenty20 form he had shown in the World Cup in South Africa. An audacious extra-cover drive for six and a late cut off Munaf quickly brought the asking rate below a run a ball, after which it was a cool canter.

Rajasthan's one hope was Warne, but Gambhir and Dhawan didn't allow him to settle in either, sweeping and pulling him for fours even as Warne's reactions suggested he was only a whisker away from a wicket. He pulled himself off the attack after just two overs, and the rest was a mere formality.

SCORES IN BRIEF

RAJASTHAN ROYALS: 129 for 8 in 20 overs (Jadeja 29, Salunkhe 26, Watson 21, Warne 14, Pathan 10, Maharoof 2-11, Bhatia 2-17, McGrath 1-21, Vettori 1-35)

DELHI DAREDEVILS: 132 for 1 in 15.1 overs (Gambhir 58 not out, Dhawan 52 not out, Schwag 12; Watson 1-31)

Result: Delhi Daredevils won by 9 wickets.

Toss: Rajasthan Royals.

Man-of-the-match: Farveez Maharoof.

Umpires: Aleem Dar and GA Pratapkumar.

Return pleases Flintoff

Cricket

CRICINFO, undated

Andrew Flintoff was on Saturday content with his return to first-class cricket but insisted that his fragile left ankle will require constant supervision for the rest of his career.

Flintoff's ankle was operated on over the winter and he made his comeback for Lancashire in their drawn match against Surrey at The Oval over the past four days. He only made 23 with the bat but returned the encouraging figures of 1 for 72 from 28 steady overs in Surrey's mammoth 537 for 5 declared.

From a fitness point of view I thought I kept my pace up all the way through my spells, maybe there is a little bit more in there but not a great deal," Flintoff said at The Oval, when the fourth and final

day was washed out. "It was quite a placid pitch and it was about focusing on getting it in the right areas given the players they've got in their team.

"I have always been confident coming back but when you've had four operations you have a bit more knowledge about your ankle. I just turned up here to play a game of cricket under no concern about how my fitness was going to be.

"I just turned up here to play a game of cricket under no concern about how my fitness was going to be."

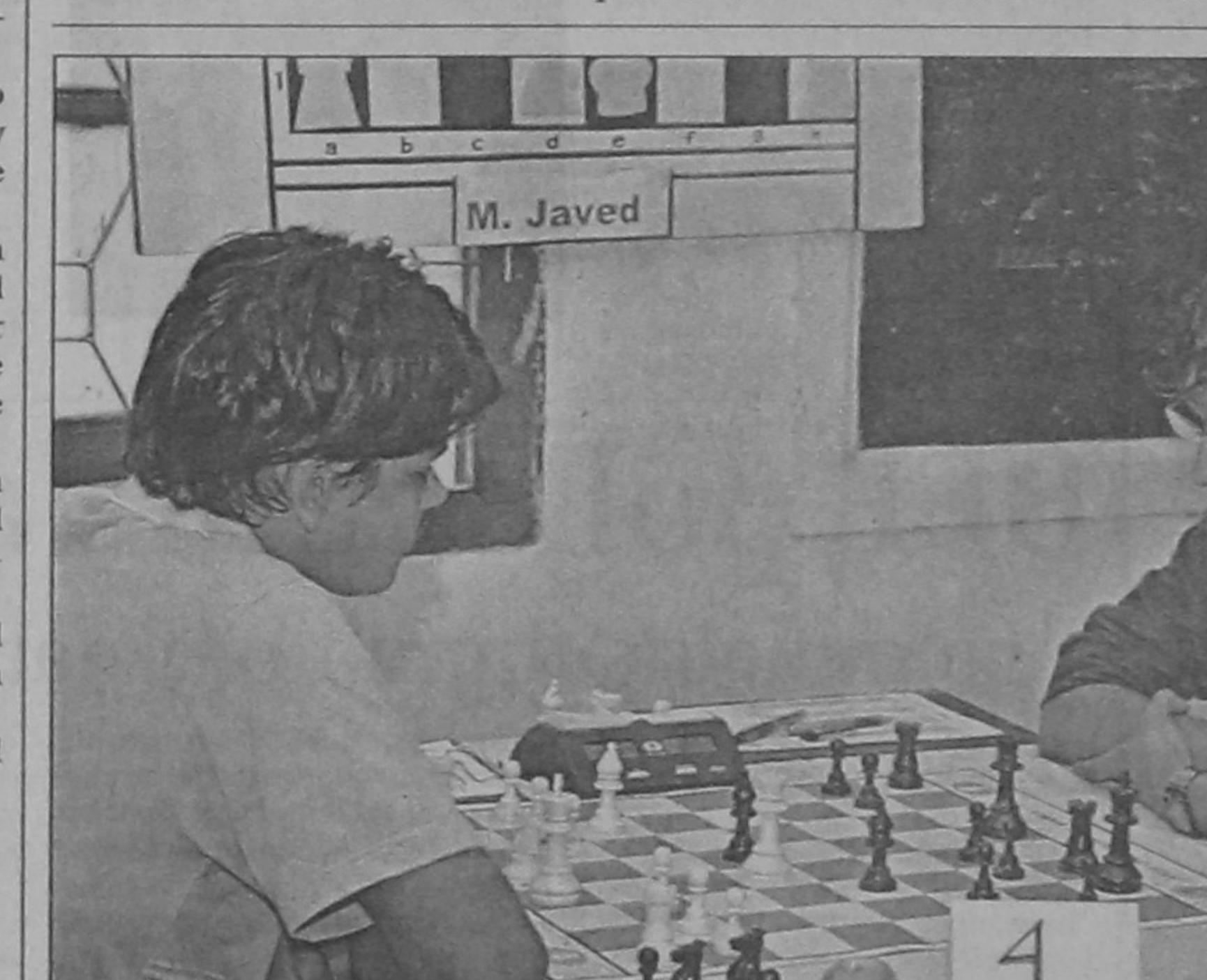
In the past, Flintoff has rushed his comeback from ankle surgery. Combined with his heavy workload this has caused a recurrence of the injury but, this time round, he hopes it might be fourth time lucky.

"Coming out of the operation, hopefully it is cured clinically but then probably from a workload point of view -- I have come back

from the previous operations and played for a period of time -- maybe if I played for a period of time, for 10 or 12 months, and break the cycle of bowling 150 overs, 200 overs and breaking down I will be happy," he said. "But I am going to have to keep working on my ankle, my left leg and calf in particular.

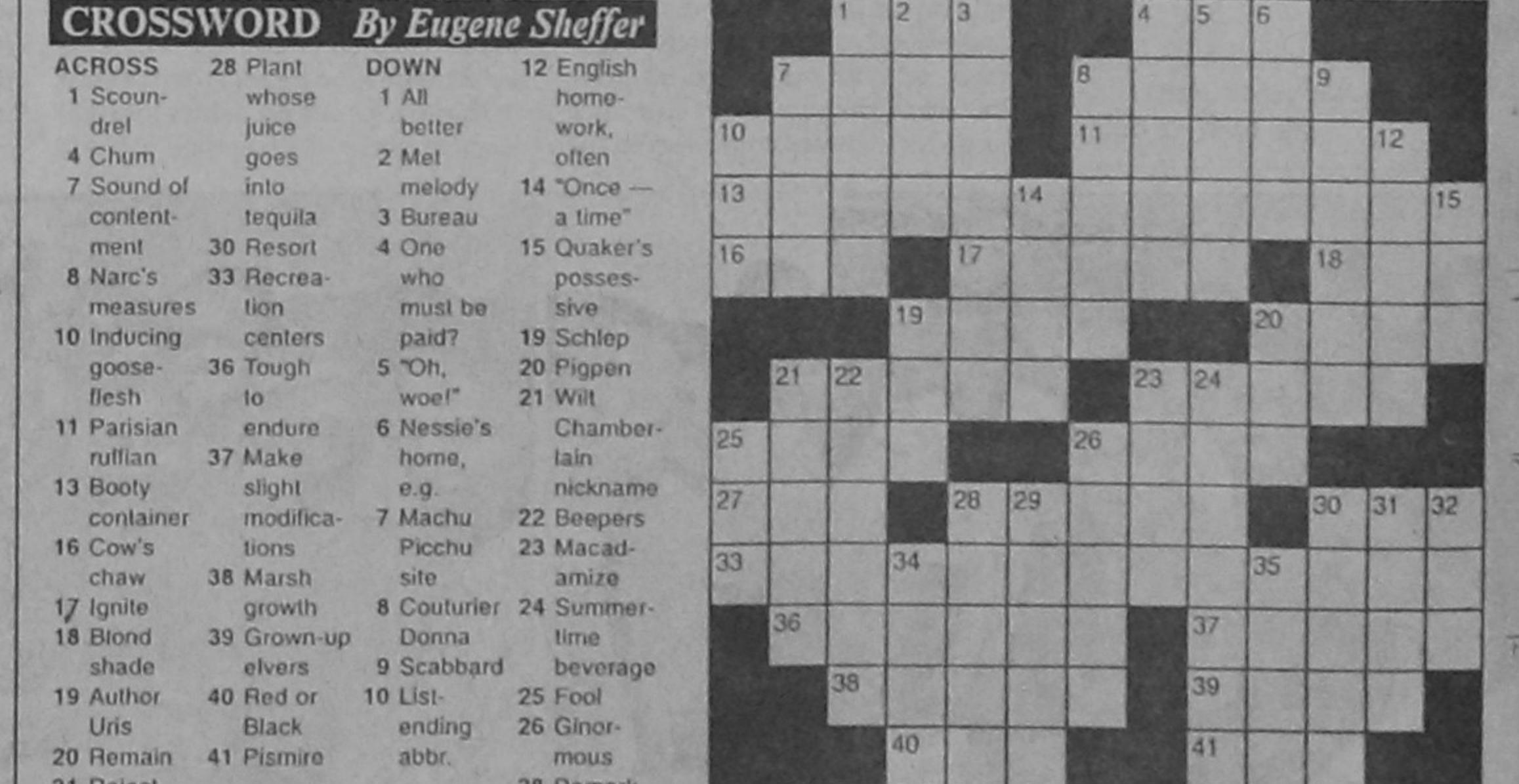
"So I will probably be on some sort of rehab programme now for the rest of my career." With the first Test against New Zealand only a month away, Flintoff admitted his keenness to be selected but remained cautious about his chances.

"I would love to be involved on May 15, there is obviously no change there, but I know I have to perform," he said. "It's nice to get 28 overs under my belt and bowl quite nicely but I have to score some runs as well, which I am working hard to do and fully aware of."



GM Abdullah Al Rakib (R) ponders his next move on the opening day of the National Sports Council yesterday.

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer



CRYPTOQUIP

D P J V E Z D K J G X Q M O U P G I F P

L I F G U X J X X M I V X G Z O M C E K ,

M A F J X X U P J K L I F E C N J

L Z E E J C U G M Z E N E Z Q J G X .

Yesterday's Cryptoquip: I SUPPOSE FELONIES

COMMITTED DURING CONGRESSIONAL SESSIONS ARE CALLED CAPITOL OFFENSES.

Today's Cryptoquip Clue: D equals W



PHOTO: COURTESY
Winners of the banglalink Noboborsho Cup Golf Tournament and the 15th banglalink Challenge Cup Golf Tournament pose for photographs with chief guest Lt Gen ATM Zahirul Alam at the Kurmitola Golf Club on Friday.