

Mirpur ride on Akhtar

SPORTS REPORTER

Akhtar's brilliant century gave Mirpur Cricket Club a close two-wicket win over Dhanmondi Cricket Academy (DCA) in Second Division Cricket League at the Dhaka University ground yesterday.

Young Akhtar struck fourteen boundaries and two sixes in his 121-ball knock to take Mirpur to the victory target of 240 runs in 49.4 overs. Earlier, DCA set a score of 239 in 50 overs with contributions from Jimmy (65) and Mohsin (51).

Away at the City Club ground, Nabin Sangha beat Kalabagan Cricket Academy (KCA) by five wickets. Opting to bat first, KCA were bowled out for 149 in 40.1 overs. Khairul and Farid took three wickets apiece. Later, Rubel's 47 was enough as Nabin Sangha won in only 33.3 overs.

In the other match of the day, Young Cricketers (172-7 in 46.2 overs) beat Rajshahi Al Rashid Club (171 all out in 47.1 overs) by three wickets at the Fatullah Cricket Stadium.

G4S to honour Sharmin

SPORTS REPORTER

Group 4 Securicor, a private security firm, will introduce gold medal winning shooter Sharmin Akhter as their brand ambassador in a ceremony today.

British High Commissioner Anwar Chowdhury will be present during the occasion at the company's headquarters in Baridhara.

Sharmin Akhter won gold in SAF Games held in Sri Lanka last year.

Booters call

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state of the game with those people?" questioned the wily footballer.

Zakaria Pintoo claimed Amin Ahmed to be an honest and able candidate and appealed the councilors to vote for the best man.

Recent past national captain Arif Khan Joy, reading a written statement, said that the footballers gathered not to speak for any particular person.

"Football is a death ship and it has lost its glory. We are here to revive the game and make sure that the footballers get the opportunity to play."

"We had to go on strike just to get the right to play in the last five years when the football bosses stole footballs and sat inside the splendid BFF Bhaban. Foreign coaches like Samir Shakir, George Kottan and Diego Cruciani have been kicked out although they loved our football and wanted to develop it."

"Not only that, national footballers have also been ignored. So we want to end that and hope that the councilors will elect the right persons. We want honest men who will work for football and keep it alive," the written statement added.

Kaiser Hamid, Kaikobad, Motaleb, Amalesh, Zahir, Alfaz, Arman, Zakir and other footballers were also present.

Salahuddin

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They were, however, freed following the President's mercy.

Meanwhile, the drama was followed by nomination papers withdrawal as the two 'panels' were set for election.

Salahuddin will now lead the panel that features most of the members of the incumbent BFF executive committee, that has 'become enemy of the footballers' by failing to keep the game on the field.

Ex-BFF general secretary Anwarul Haque Helal and veteran vice-president Sirajul Islam Bachchu both sacrificed posts of vice-presidents to make way for 'Forum' leader Golam Rasool Mollah, Manzoor Hossain Malu, Ashrafuddin Ahmed Chunnun and Abdur Rahim. The senior vice-president is Monir Ahmed.

Helal and Bachchu are lined up for members (from Dhaka clubs) along with Mojammel Haque Mukta, Azfaruzzaman Sohrab, MR Shaheen, M Azim Badal, Golam Rabbani Helal and Amirul Islam Babu, a man who is held responsible for Salahuddin's resignation in 2005. The other seven are Forum members Asaduzzaman Khasru, Mokbul Ahmed, Shafiquzzaman, Abul Khair Chaudan, Arshad Ali, Shahiduzzaman Shahid and Hakiul Islam.

Maj Gen (ret'd) Amin Ahmed Chowdhury's panel includes Salam Murshedi as senior vice-president, Badal Roy, Shawkat Al Khan Jahangir, Kazi Nabil Ahmed, Nurul Alam Chowdhury (vice-presidents) and Harunur Rashid, Sheikh Mohammed Aslam, Fazlur Rahman Babul, Abu Hassan Chowdhury, Jinnatul Islam, Satyajit Das Rupa, MA Gafur, Hasanuzzaman Khan Babloo, Abdul Wadud Pintu, Manzoor Morshed, Saiful Islam Bhutto, Shamsul Haque Chowdhury, Hamidul Haque Bahalul, Khorsheed Babul, Towfiqul Islam and Ekrumul Karim Chowdhury.

It can be noted that executive committee members cannot vote according to the new constitution but the FIFA and AFC have given the BFF special permission to change their councilors so that the vote of the clubs/DFA will not go waste, informed a BFF official.



Pakistan Cricket Academy players are all smiles after they clinched the Grameenphone Academy Cup title at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

Pollock joins Durham

Cricket

AFP, London

South Africa great Shaun Pollock is to join Durham for the English county's Twenty20 Cup campaign this season, the northeast side announced Wednesday.

Pollock, who appeared alongside Durham captain Dale Benkenstein at Natal and for South Africa, played in 108 Tests and 303 one-day internationals before retiring from international cricket in February.

The 34-year-old pace bowler, renowned for his accuracy, will join up with the Durham squad in June.

"When I got the offer from Durham I really jumped at the chance to get on board, they are determined to do well in the Twenty20 Cup and I want to contribute to that success," Pollock said in a statement.

"They proved themselves to be a force in the four-day and one-day game last year and I'm keen to help them replicate that success in the Twenty20 Cup," added Pollock, who captained South Africa from 2000-2003 after the corrupt Hansie Cronje was forced out and previously played county cricket for Midlands side Warwickshire.

Durham chief executive David Harker added: "Shaun is one of the biggest talents in world cricket and we're delighted that he's decided to join us."

"He's got great experience in all formats of the game and we think he'll bring a great presence to the team, both on and off the field."

Pollock will also be commenting on this season's Test match and one-day international series between England and South Africa for Sky Sports television and BBC Radio Test Match Special.

Adam Mountford, the Test Match Special producer, said:

"Having been so recently involved in the international game, and indeed still playing cricket at a high level, he (Pollock) will be able to provide a fascinating insight."

"We just hope he will give more away when he is commenting than he does when he is bowling!"

The son of former South Africa quick Peter and nephew of legendary batsman Graeme, Pollock is due to make his Durham debut on June 11 against Derbyshire at the Riverside.

Pollock, also a dangerous lower-order batsman, took 421 Test wickets at a low average of 23.11 apiece, taking five wickets in an innings on 16 occasions and 10 in a match once.

His batting, which perhaps never reached its full potential, saw Pollock score 3,781 Test runs at 32.31 with two hundreds.

In one-day internationals, Pollock took 393 wickets at 24.50 and scored 3,519 runs at 26.45.

Asoka made Elite again

Cricket

CRICINFO, undated

Sri Lankan umpire Asoka de Silva and Steve Davis of Australia have been promoted to International Cricket Council's Elite Panel, following the body's decision to expand the pool from 10 to 12 umpires.

De Silva, the former leg-spinner who played 10 Tests and 28 ODIs between 1985 and 1992, was one of eight full-time umpires selected for the ICC's Elite Panel when it was first introduced in 2002. De Silva has stood in 33 Tests and 76 ODIs after making his debut in 1999 and has served previously on the Elite Panel between 2002 and 2004.

Davis, 56, has stood in 11 Tests, 71 ODIs and three Twenty20 Internationals having made his top-level debut in 1992.

"Their promotions are a result of perseverance, hard work and commitment and I am sure these two umpires will serve as an inspiration to the other international umpires who are striving hard to break into the Elite Panel," Dave Richardson, the ICC's general manager, said. "For Asoka, it will be his second time in the Elite Panel and he has returned after performing outstandingly on the international panel over the past 12 months."

"Asoka brings with him a combination of playing and umpiring skills and that combination is one that we believe will serve him well in the months and years to come."

"Steve has served an apprenticeship on the fringes of the Elite Panel and his elevation reflects not only his consistency during recent years but also his excellence over the past year in particular."

"I have no doubt that the elevation of these two quality umpires will strengthen the Elite Panel."

De Silva was understandably delighted in his promotion, adding: "It has required a lot of hard work leading to good decision-making on a consistent basis and I am glad my efforts have been recognised. I am now keen to ensure I maintain the high standards I have set myself."

"I am thrilled to be appointed to the Elite Panel," Davis said, "as it has to be the aim of every umpire to be appointed to this select group. I have worked hard for this and now I look forward to concentrating on umpiring on a full-time basis. I have always enjoyed the company of those umpires already on the Elite Panel and now I have the chance to work with them all on a more regular basis. I am really looking forward to the challenges ahead."

Sehwag mauls Deccan

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maiden, but it was Asif who did the early damage. Adam Gilchrist played on after smashing Asif over the square-leg boundary, and two overs later Laxman only managed a faint inside-edge onto the stumps off an in-cutter.

At the other end, Venugopal Rao was all at sea against McGrath, managing only two runs off his first eight deliveries against the Australian, before breaking the shackles with a four over long-off. He had a lucky stay at the crease, with mistimed pulls and heaves, till Farveez Maharoof ended his misery, inducing a hit straight down the throat of Shikhar Dhawan on the cover boundary.

McGrath bowled through his four but Andrew Symonds' two consecutive fours in his fourth -- pulling one to midwicket and stepping out to make room for one over midwicket -- spoilt his figures. Symonds had top scored for his side in the Kolkata nightmare, but Maharoof prevented a repeat, getting him to edge one to wicketkeeper Dinesh Karthik.

Rohit got going with a first-ball four off Y Mahesh, and took his chances from the start, hitting two streaky boundaries off Maharoof. There was a brief lull after Shahid Afridi fell leg-before to Rajat Bhatia, but Rohit got the momentum going with a six off Bhatia

before going berserk in the 18th over bowled by Maharoof.

Midwicket was targeted the first two deliveries, then Rohit made room to send one screaming through the covers and paddled one to fine leg, before a dead-straight drive, all resulting in boundaries. That over -- which read 1,6,6,4,4,4,2 -- ensured Deccan reached a respectable score. Rohit reached his fifty off just 31 balls, falling for 66 off 36, and saw a crucial 52 coming off the last three overs.

Delhi's reply began with Sehwag surviving a close leg-before shout against Chaminda Vaas, and he soon began to make Deccan pay, hitting RP Singh for fours through midwicket and to the fine-leg boundary. He was on 13 when given another life, Pragyan Ojha spilling one on the boundary, Vaas the aggrieved bowler yet again.

Gautam Gambhir fell to RP in the next over, but Shikhar Dhawan came up with another unbeaten innings, acting as a perfect foil to Sehwag's pyrotechnics at the other end. Short deliveries were dispatched with disdain by both batsmen before Sehwag cut loose against Sanjay Bangar. Twenty came off four deliveries: a four over backward point was followed by two lobs behind square leg, before he hammered one over midwicket to bring up fifty off just 27 balls.

Gilchrist fluffed a stumping down the leg side as Sehwag tried to hit Ojha inside-out; but the blitz that followed would have deflated the already demoralised Deccan players.

At 112-1 off 12 overs, Delhi were almost home but their captain was perhaps keen on flying out of Hyderabad quickly. The 13th over, from Symonds, saw Sehwag leveling the scores as he dealt in boundaries, alternating between fours and sixes. A wide from Vaas the next over sealed the win. Deccan would be disappointed with their second consecutive loss but, thoroughly outplayed by the visitors, they can have no complaints.

SCORES IN BRIEF
DECCAN CHARGERS: 142 for 8 in 20 overs (Gilchrist 8, Rao 14, Laxman 2, Symonds 12, Sharma 66, Afridi 2, Bangar 8, Yadav 12, Vaas 12 not out, RP Singh 1 not out; Asif 2-19, Maharoof 2-36, Mahesh 1-35, Bhatia 2-27)

DELHI DAREDEVILS: 143 for 1 in 13 overs (Gambhir 12, Sehwag 94 not out, Dhawan 25 not out; RP Singh 1-27)

Result Delhi Daredevils won by 9 wickets.
Man-of-the-match: Virender Sehwag.

Umpires: IL Howell (South Africa) and AM Saheba
Toss: Deccan Chargers

LOCAL SNIPPETS

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh Rifles beat Wari Club 25-12, 25-10, 25-18 in the Premier Division Volleyball League at the Dhaka Volleyball Stadium yesterday.

In another match, Police upset Titus Club 25-12, 25-14, 25-20 at the same venue in the afternoon.

In today's match, Fire Service face East End Boys.

JUNIOR ATHLETICS

UNB adds: The two-day 24th National Junior Athletics, organized by Bangladesh Athletics Federation, will begin at the Bangabandhu National Stadium on May 7.

Interested teams and associations have been requested to send list of their participants (Under-15 and Under-17) by April 28.

DIV III CRICKET

Narayanganj Cricket Academy (NCA) rode on Saiful's 72 in their 31-run victory over Sheikh Russell Krira Chakra in Third Division Cricket League at the Gulshan Youth ground yesterday.

Opting to bat first, NCA amassed 298-6 in 50 overs with Saiful's contributions standing vital. Tariqul smashed 46 to contribute to the big score. In reply, Sheikh Russell were bowled out for 267 in 46.3 overs.

In the other matches, Gulshan Youth Club (178-7 in 43.5 overs) beat Uttara Friends Club (174 all out in 46.3 overs) by three wickets at the Dhanmondi Club ground; Kamrangchar Sporting Club (78-1 in 14.5 overs) beat Lalbagh Anwar (73 all out in 30.4 overs) by nine wickets at the Uttara Friends Club ground and Young Pegasus A (206-6 in 48.2 overs) defeated Progoti Sheba Sangha (202 all out in 50 overs) by four wickets at the Dhanmondi Cricket Stadium.

Warne wishes Tendulkar on his birthday

PTI, Jaipur

On Sachin Tendulkar's 35th birthday today, legendary Australian leg-spinner Shane Warne wished the master batsman as many playing years as he wanted.

Warne said cricket fans would have to wait for long to have another player of Tendulkar's calibre, so he should be allowed to continue his career instead of critics suggesting him to retire in the wake of his injuries and occasional form-slumps.

"He is a great player. We may have to wait for many many years to have another player like him. He should be allowed to continue till he wants to," said Warne while his stay in the city for a recent Indian Premier League match.

Warne, who is captaining and coaching the Rajasthan Royals team in the Indian Premier League, said Tendulkar was "the best" batsman in the recent times.

"I feel West Indian Brian Lara and Sachin are the best batsmen of the recent times but I rate Sachin 'the best' not only because of his amazing cricketing ability but also because of the exemplary manner in which he conducts himself on and off the field."

"He is a wonderful guy. Naturally and exceptionally talented, affectionate and always smiling. There may be other good batsmen in the world but I feel that the word 'great' has been used most often for him. I feel Sachin is truly 'great' because of the manner in which he conducts himself. He is disciplined, co-operative, naturally talented and dedicated player," he said.

Misers united



CRICINFO, undated

Purists might object to the helter-skelter of Twenty20, but one of the joys of the Indian Premier League (IPL) is the way fantasy can become reality. Ever wondered how Andrew Symonds and Shahid Afridi might fare in the same team? Simple: just buy them both at auction. Curious about the new-ball potential of Glenn McGrath and Mohammad Asif? Ditto.

It was the dream team which came out on top, providing a masterclass from both ends, with Farveez Maharoof -- until he was collared late on by the pulsating Rohit Sharma -- carrying on the good work at first change. You've heard of dibbly, dabbly and wobbly. Well, step forward niggardly, naggingly and give-away-noting.

But it was the pairing for the first time in the competition of McGrath and Asif that really got the aesthete's juices flowing. One, a retired 38-year-old, still shaking his head furiously at the slightest aberration and showing that there really is no substitute for targeting the top of off stump; the other, aged 25, languid, supple, flowing, and the man more likely than any in the game to emerge with McGrath's

crown.

After the seven overs they bowled together at the start of the match, a Deccan Chargers top four containing Adam Gilchrist, VVS Laxman and Symonds had scraped together 34 runs for the loss of two wickets: McGrath had 4-1-22-0, Asif 3-0-11-2. Four of the runs McGrath conceded came from a Chinese cut by Venugopal Rao, and one of them might have been a wicket after Rao fortuitously top-edged a pull which somehow plopped to safety.

McGrath began immaculately to ensure he has now bowled two of the three maidens sent down in the IPL so far (the third, by Ishant Sharma, came on the Eden Gardens slag-heap), and his parsimony proved contagious. Asif, bowling with his right arm in a brace following elbow surgery, caught the bug, and although Gilchrist picked his third ball up for six -- these things happen -- he struck back soon after with a ball that ricocheted onto leg-stump as Gilchrist aimed to cut.

The delivery that got Laxman four overs later was more worthy of a wicket, jaggling back at the last moment to turn Laxman's attempted whip through the leg side, so often a strength, into a fatal weakness. But it was the way the two bowlers fed off each other, like a pair of misers cackling over a piggy-bank, which truly stifled Deccan. "They gave us the start we

wanted," Virender Sehwag said afterwards. "It allowed us to put them under pressure."

Maharoof, another McGrath prototype, was the ideal foil, removing Rao with the last ball of his first over, then snaring the big beast Symonds with the third delivery of his second as Dinesh Karthik pulled off a smart tumbling catch. After three overs, Maharoof had 2 for 10, and it required some ferocious -- not to say precocious -- hitting from Sharma to dent his figures.

This, though, might just be the most effective trio of seamers in the competition. If Delhi were made to look good by an inexperienced Rajasthan Royals side at the Feroz Shah Kotla on Saturday, then this was high-class seam bowling on a good pitch against a potentially headache-inducing batting line-up. Remarkably, the trio cost the Daredevils' owners, GMR Holdings, a not-very-grand total of 1,225,000 dollars, which is less than Symonds' -- out for just 12 on Tuesday and mauled for 30 in an over by Sehwag -- fetched by himself.

Sehwag, predictably enough, was named Man of the Match for his undefeated 94 off 41 balls, but without the control handed him for all but one of the 12 overs bowled by McGrath and his two sidekicks, he might never have thrown such caution to the wind. For all tonight's evidence, it really is a batsman's game.

Pink ball gains pace

Cricket

INTERNET, undated

A pink cricket ball used at Lord's could help Australia realise its revolutionary ambition to stage Test matches at night.

The ball had previously been shot out of a cannon onto hard surfaces in a laboratory at the Imperial College in London to test its durability, but this week was employed in a game between the Marylebone Cricket Club and Scotland.

The luminous pink orb is likely to be discussed when Cricket Australia's manager of cricket operations, Michael Brown, meets scientists from the CSIRO and Australian Institute of Sport next week to kick-start the search for a ball that can be seen by batsmen at night and behaves in a manner suitable for Test cricket.

"We want to try and do a proper, orchestrated research project," Brown said. "If we are serious about this issue -- to get a better day-night cricket ball and a ball we could possibly use in Test cricket -- (we need to) understand the constraints, which is what the MCC are doing."

He explained that different climatic conditions in Australia might demand different qualities

in a ball, and therefore CA intended to carry out its own study.

"We need to factor in the practical cricket people, the scientists, the people who make the leather, the cricket ball manufacturers. We see this as being a really serious project that could have lots of implications, but you've got to understand, too, it could go nowhere, who knows. Our intention is to do it properly... I will be interested in seeing the full details of the (pink ball) trial when they become available."

MCC captain John Stephenson, the club's head of cricket and a former England batsman, said the experiment was far from finished.

"The pink Kookaburra behaved like a white ball when I was bowling with it," he told The Times in London. "The test will come under lights and on television and I would like the ECB to try it out in Twenty20 matches, but that will not be this year."

Stephenson added: "Some of the dye on the ball did come away, which revealed part of the white underneath, but I think everyone who used it would agree that it is progress."

"Taking things forward, we plan to use the ball in a number of our other MCC matches, University matches and also county second-team games (but) we need to see how the ball reacts to more abra-

sive pitches in say the heat of the sub-continent than just on a lush green Lord's ground in April."

Dr Anthony Bull, of Imperial College, was encouraged by the initial results. "We could create any colour. At the moment we are shooting it from a cannon against a very hard surface. The problem with white balls has been that they pick up the colour of the pitch. We are being led by the cricket world that red is the optimum and need to simulate that with whatever colour."

"There should be no huge difference between how the pink ball reacts to normal cricket conditions; it will be probably be closer to how the white ball behaves than the red."

"The red ball is dyed and it goes into the leather. For the pink ball, it is painted on in a very smart way, but therefore it's very similar to the white ball in the way it is achieved. Certainly one of the challenges the pink ball faces, because of its colour, is batsman being able to determine the seam position during flight."

Cricket Australia chief executive James Sutherland has voiced an ambitious plan to stage some Tests in a day-night timeslot (from 2pm-9pm) within three years, to boost crowds and television audiences, and now the England and Wales Cricket Board is also exploring the possibility.

Hopes run high

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see the new academy," said Moeen. "Nowadays, cricket has become a very popular game in the country. We want to see a successful Bangladesh cricket team that is able to win both at home and away and I am sure this academy will go a long way in ensuring quality training to our talented cricketers. We want to see our players smiling at the airport when they return home and not with their heads down," he added.

"We hope this academy will help future cricketers of the country to achieve international standard and ensure a stream of talented players for the national team. We are proud to be associated with the development of cricket in Bangladesh,"

said Grameenphone CEO Andres Jensen.

Under the agreement, Grameenphone will provide funds to assist in establishing and operating the academy programmes and each year an Academy Cup will be organised to select young cricketers from different age groups and divisions to nurture them under the programme for one year.

The proposed three-storied building with six-stories foundation will cost Tk six crore.

BCB president Maj Gen Sina Ibn Jamali, cricket operations committee chairman Gazi Ashraf Hossain Lipu and other board officials and cricketers were also present on the occasion.

Kiwis agree to play in Pakistan

CRICINFO, undated

New Zealand will warm up for the Champions Trophy in September with a three-ODI series in Pakistan, subject to safety approval. New Zealand had been asked to extend their trip to five matches, after West Indies turned down Pakistan's offer to visit for three one-dayers as well, but decided on three.

A New Zealand spokesperson told Cricinfo: "NZC has agreed to play three matches in Pakistan. With the Champions Trophy taking place we felt that was the right number in terms of our preparation."

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

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