

## NCA batsmen fail to fire

SPORTS REPORTER

Paceman Mahbubul Alam Robin captured two wickets to put GP-BCB National Cricket Academy's (NCA) poor batting in the shade on the opening day of the first four-day match against Pakistan Cricket Academy (PCA) at the Shaheed Chandu Stadium yesterday.

After NCA were bowled out for a paltry 192 in only 49.2 overs, Robin removed hard-hitting opener Ahmed Shehzad for a duck off the fifth ball of the PCA innings and later trapped Azhar Ali (5) leg-before to keep the hosts in the game by reducing the visitors to 95-4 in 26 overs at stumps.

In between, captain Mehrab Hossain ran out PCA opener Khuram Manzoor (4) and captain Khalid Latif was caught behind off leg-spinner Raihanuddin Arafat after making 47. Latif struck six boundaries and a six in his knock that spanned ten minutes short of two hours. Asad Shafiq was unbeaten on 21 with wicketkeeper Sarfraz Ahmed (5\*).

But the day began on the wrong foot for the Academy side were reduced to 73-4 at lunch. Jahurul Islam (4) and one-drop Sahagir Hossain (1) were removed by the sixth over. Farhad Hossain, the Rajshahi batsman, struck seven fours in his 81-ball 39 but he was run out by wicketkeeper Sarfraz Ahmed in the 24th over.

After lunch, Mushfiqur Rahim and Shamsur Rahman consolidated to add 65 for the fifth wicket. Shamsur, who scored a quickfire 40 hitting eight boundaries, was removed by leg-spinner Yasir Shah. Rahim stayed at the crease for more than two hours and scored 32 before he became Yasir's second victim in the 47th over.

Nasir Hossain, who came into

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## Did U Know?

The first player to be red-carded in a FIFA World Cup final was Pedro Monzon of Argentina against West Germany in 1990.



**SET Max**  
Indian Premier League  
King XI Punjab v Delhi Daredevils  
Live from 3:30pm  
Mumbai Indians v Deccan Chargers  
Live from 7:30pm

**ESPN**  
English Premier League  
Portsmouth v Blackburn Rovers  
Live from 6:25pm  
Everton v Aston Villa  
Live at 8:55pm

**STAR Sports**  
Primera Liga  
Real Madrid v Bilbao  
Live from 1:00am (Monday)



**Shane Warne**  
(Legendary Australian leg spinner)  
"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, cooperative, naturally talented and dedicated player."  
On Sachin Tendulkar.



A HARD EARNED TRIUMPH: Players of Abahani celebrate after they clinched the Brac Bank Club Cup hockey competition at the Maulana Bhasani Hockey Stadium yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

## Abahani lift title but Sonali win hearts

SPORTS REPORTER

Abahani survived a second-half scare against spirited Sonali Bank in the exciting final of the Brac Bank Club Cup hockey to regain the title of the season's curtain-raiser tournament at the Maulana Bhasani National Stadium yesterday.

Mamunur Rahman Chayan, the highest scorer of the meet with eight goals, scripted the popular outfit's 4-3 victory against the bankers by scoring two goals in either half. It was not only clean but also an entertaining final after Abahani's ill-tempered semifinal against their bitter rivals Mohammedan.

It seemed to be a one-sided affair when the Dhanmondi-based club went for the breather with a 3-0 lead but their youthful opponents regrouped in the second-half to make sure that their entry into the final at the cost of another giant Usha Krira Chakra was no fluke.

Rimon Kumar brought Sonali back in the contention when he

latched on Sheikh Mohammad Nannu's right-flank pass in the 49th minute to reduce the margin to 3-1 and after four minutes it was Iqbal Nader who silenced the cheering Abahani supporters with the second goal for the bankers.

Iqbal completed a solo run to make it 3-2 but on both occasions, Abahani's defense including goalkeeper Zahid Hossain were found wanting, especially against the brilliant stick-work of Nannu.

Chayan however brought a sigh of relief for the giants by striking his second goal in the 60th minute by capitalising on a penalty corner. Incredibly, Asaduzzaman Chanda kept up the pressure by making it 4-3 with five minutes left to play.

Abahani kept their nerve to ensure their second title in the competition after 2006.

It was however all about Abahani's story in the first half as they took the lead in the very first minute through Rasel Mahmud Jimmy's powerful hit and doubled the margin after seven minutes when Chayan capitalised from his first penalty corner.

Mazharul Islam scored the third goal from a counterattack.

Abahani skipper Mahbubul Ehsan blamed his boys' lack of fitness behind second-half's poor showing.

"Our struggle in the second-half continued also in the final game as the lack of fitness has been a big issue for us. Most of our players including myself were not fit enough to play the entire match at the same rhythm," said Rana.

"We were also in a relaxed mood after a comfortable lead in the first-half and I must say our opponents took the opportunity brilliantly," he added.

On the other hand, Sonali Bank captain Ashiquzzaman was pleased despite his team's defeat in the final.

"We are satisfied with our performance. As a young side we

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### ROLL OF HONOUR

YEAR	CHAMPIONS	RUNNERS-UP
1998	Usha	Abahani
2000	Usha	Mohammedan
2002	Mohammedan	Usha
2003	Mohammedan	Abahani
2004	Abahani	Mariner Youngs
2006	Mohammedan	Abahani
2008	Abahani	Sonali Bank

## Amin speaks his mind

Football

SPORTS REPORTER

Maj Gen (retd) Amin Ahmed Chowdhury declared his panel's election manifesto yesterday with a slogan of a 'united effort' to breathe life into the country's languishing game.

Criticising the malfunctioning last five years, the combined panel's president candidate said that their 23-point proposal could revive the popularity and improve the standard of the game.

But he ensured that whatever the result in tomorrow's elections against his rivals' panel led by legendary striker Kazi Salahuddin they will try to get involved for the greater interest of the game.

"We disclosed our election manifesto today (Saturday) but we will

come up with our roadmap within four months if the councillors ultimately vote us to run the show," promised the former Army man while talking during a press conference at a local hotel yesterday.

"I tried my best to host one panel but ultimately it was not realised but still I believe that a united effort as well as proper planning can bring back the golden days of the game," he added.

The blame-game however continued with only two days to go as former national player Salam Murshedi, who is contesting for the senior vice-president's post, raised questions about his opponent's misuse of power.

"They are taking undue advantage as incumbent office bearers," said Murshedi.

He also blasted his opponents to launch a false campaign against them by saying that they have been

receiving the blessings of Bangladesh Olympic Association (BOA).

"The election fever gripped everybody as we physically went to the councillors to convince them but it's not true that we are getting favour of BOA officials. Everybody should understand that BOA is the supreme authority of all organisations," he explained.

Despite this kind of negative campaign, Amin Ahmed however was very confident about his panel's victory in the elections.

"I believe the councillors picked the right people to take the game few steps forward. I think in our manifesto we clearly gave a guideline about our future planning," said Amin.

The highly ambitious point included in the proposal is that they will arrange an international tournament while arranging loan

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## Tigers train from Apr 29

SPORTS REPORTER

The national cricketers will be back to training at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium on Tuesday.

All fourteen players who were in the Pakistan tour will take part in the training camp ahead of next month's tri-series involving India and Pakistan.

Meanwhile, the Tigers will be without coach Jamie Siddons and physiotherapist Darryn Lifson are currently on holiday. The pair returned with the Tigers from Pakistan after their 5-0 whitewash in the one-day series.

## Hearing on April 28

CRICINFO, undated

Indian Premier League (IPL) match referee Farokh Engineer will conduct a hearing on April 28 inquiring into the Harbhajan Singh-Sreesanth row in Delhi. Both Harbhajan and Sreesanth will be present and video evidence, if any, will be used during the hearing which will be conducted as per the ICC Code of Conduct.

Engineer was the match referee of the game between the Kings XI Punjab and the Mumbai Indians, after the completion of which Harbhajan allegedly slapped Sreesanth, reducing him to tears on the field. Although both players sought to play down the incident, the Punjab team lodged a formal complaint against Harbhajan Singh to the BCCI. The Indian board took a serious view of the incident and asked him submit his explanation before April 28.

"The inquiry date has been fixed for Monday in New Delhi. We are not going to sweep things under the carpet. The complaint has to be carefully examined before any decision is made," Engineer said. "Everything possible will be done to adjudicate it immediately."

"The complaint made by the management of the Punjab team has been referred to me by Lalit Modi, chief commissioner of the IPL, for immediate adjudication under the ICC Code of Conduct. I have already started the process and will be summoning all concerned and will also seek any video evidence recorded by the host broadcaster."

### LOCAL SNIPPETS

SPORTS REPORTER

Power Development Board crushed East End Boys in straight sets in the Premier Division Volleyball League at the Volleyball Stadium yesterday.

PDB beat East End 25-15, 25-07, 25-13.

In the First Division, Dilkusha defeated Azad Sporting 25-23, 25-20, 26-24, 25-22.

### DIV II CRICKET

Shahriar and Sarfaraz took three wickets each to power Eskaton Sabuj Sangha to an easy eight-wicket victory over Prime Dholeswar Sporting Club in the Second Division Cricket League at the Fatullah Cricket Stadium.

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## Ballack keeps Blues alive

AFP, London



Chelsea midfielder Michael Ballack breathed new life into the Premier League title race as his late penalty clinched a dramatic 2-1 win over Manchester United on Saturday.

Avram Grant's side are now level on points with leaders United with two games to play after Ballack's double strike settled a thrilling clash at Stamford Bridge.

Ballack opened the scoring in the first half before Wayne Rooney punished a horrendous mistake by Ricardo Carvalho to equalise after the break.

United had one hand on the title at that stage but Michael Carrick gifted Chelsea a lifeline when he handled in the penalty area with four minutes left and Ballack took full advantage.

Sir Alex Ferguson's reigning champions still hold the advantage thanks to their vastly superior goal difference and wins at home to West Ham and at Wigan will guarantee them a 17th English league crown.

But Chelsea have at least ensured the battle will go down to the wire thanks to Ballack's heroics.

With United able to afford a defeat at Stamford Bridge and still stay top on goal difference, Ferguson opted to give priority to next Tuesday's Champions League semi-final second leg against Barcelona.

The Scot left Cristiano Ronaldo and Carlos Tevez on the bench, while there was no place in the 16 for Patrice Evra or Paul Scholes.

Chelsea have European commitments as well but Grant had no choice but to name all his stars, with only Frank Lampard absent following the death of his mother Pat on Thursday.

Only a win would do for Chelsea and they started at a ferocious pace.

Michael Essien set the tone with a dipping shot that cleared the crossbar, before his low strike forced Edwin van der Sar into action for the first time.

The Blues bristled with a muscular aggression that made it clear they wouldn't allow United to retain the title on their patch without a fight.

Nemanja Vidic was a victim of that physicality when Drogba inadvertently caught him with a knee in his jaw. The centre-back had to be stretched off after the blow knocked a tooth through his lip.

Vidic's departure seemed to unsettle the leaders and Joe Cole almost took advantage in the 21st minute.

Cole was granted acres of space to surge into the penalty area and

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PHOTO: INTERNET

GERMAN IMPACT: Chelsea's German midfielder Michael Ballack jumps for joy after scoring the winning goal against Manchester United from a penalty during their Premiership encounter at Stamford Bridge on Saturday.

## Bhajji 'slaps' Sree



CRICINFO, undated

The Indian Premier League (IPL) faced its first on-field controversy with allegations that Harbhajan Singh hit Sreesanth, his India teammate and IPL rival, after Friday's match between the Kings XI Punjab and the Mumbai Indians in Mohali. While Yuvraj Singh, Sreesanth's captain, said Harbhajan had apologised after the incident, it remains to be seen how the IPL will handle it as a disciplinary issue.

Sreesanth, who took two wickets for Punjab, was spotted in tears

after the match -- which his side won -- and later confirmed the incident to Cricinfo.

Sources close to him said that after the match a smiling Sreesanth walked up to Harbhajan -- the captain of the losing Mumbai Indians -- and said "Hard luck". "That was when Harbhajan lost his cool and hit Sreesanth under the eye," said sources close to the fast bowler.

Apparently, there was a verbal exchange earlier between Sreesanth and Robin Uthappa, who was leading Mumbai's chase, and the fast bowler's celebrations after dismissing Shaun Pollock didn't go down well in the rival dugout, either. However, Sreesanth, who admitted that he was "shocked" by the incident, denied that words were exchanged

between the players on the field.

Harbhajan refused to answer questions on the incident at the post-match press conference. "Can we have questions on just cricket," he said in response to questions relating to the incident. His opposing captain, however, was clear in his view. "This is really an ugly incident," Yuvraj said. "This is totally unacceptable." He added, though, that Harbhajan had visited the dressing-room after the match and apologised to Sreesanth.

"At the end of the day, players shake hands. But today (Friday night) we saw more than that from Harbhajan and Sreesanth," said Tom Moody, the Punjab coach. "The positive thing is that Harbhajan had a long chat with Sreesanth. But I am not sure what

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