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WOMEN'S ASIA CUP Salma leads historic win

Cricket
SPORTS REPORTER

Captain Salma Khatun led Bangladesh from the front to a memorable victory over Pakistan by four wickets in the Women's Asia Cup at the Welegedara Stadium in Kurunegala yesterday.

Right-handed batswoman Salma struck six boundaries in her 92-ball unbeaten knock of 53 to carry her side to the victory in 45.3 overs after her brilliant 10-over spell helped skittle out Pakistan for a paltry 134 in 47.4 overs.

After their mediocre performance in the opening game against India on Friday, the women's cricket team styled a remarkable turnaround and registered their maiden win over an established side although the game was not considered an official one-day international. The victory was also just what the team had aimed for before they left Dhaka for the tournament. Interestingly, Pakistan were also the first reputable team that the men's team defeated in the 1999 World Cup.

Back to the match and Bangladesh lost three wickets by the twelfth over during their chase

but that did not fluster captain Salma who immediately added 37 runs for the fourth wicket with all-rounder Panna Ghosh, who scored 14 off 51 balls with the help of two boundaries.

Salma then added 25 with Chamely Khatun for the fifth wicket, 24 with Rumana Ahmed for the sixth and a decisive 24 for the unbroken seventh wicket with wicketkeeper-batswoman Irin Sultan, who was unbeaten on 5 off 16 balls. It was a refreshing change after their batting debacle against India, when they were all out for only 68 runs. But yesterday, they batted steadily and can take a lot from this victory.

Earlier, Salma was the most economical bowler giving away only 18 runs in 10 overs and she also picked up two wickets, one of which was the opening wicket of Tasqeen Qadeer in the eighth over.

Off-spinner Tithy Sarkar took over from Salma and removed Bismah Maroof, opposing captain Urooj Mumtaz, Batool Fatima and lastly Sana Mir in her 9.4 overs, which yielded only 25 runs for her four-wicket haul.

Shathira Jakir took two wickets for 34 while Rumana Ahmed took 1-24 in 10 overs.

Bismah top-scored with 29 off

53 balls with the help of five boundaries and her opening partnership of 27 with Tasqeen was the highest for the innings. Sajida Shah and Sana scored 25 each and Asmavia Iqbal's 12 was all the Pakistanis could muster.

In the other match of the day in Dambulla, Mithali Raj followed up her unbeaten century on Friday with a half-century as India continued their winning ways at the Asia Cup with a 30-run victory over Sri Lanka.

The Bangladeshi women now move to Dambulla to play their third match against hosts Sri Lanka and then have a return fixture against India on May 6.

SCORES IN BRIEF
PAKISTAN: 134 all out in 47.4 overs (Tasqeen 8, Bismah 29, Urooj 2, Sajida 25, Batool 6, Sana 25, Shumaila 6, Almas 2, Asmavia 12, Qanita 1, Sadia 0*, Panna 0-15, Shamima 0-12, Salma 2-18, Tithy 4-25, Rumana 1-24, Shathira 2-34).
BANGLADESH: 136-6 in 45.3 overs (Shathira 12, Shukrata 2, Ayesha 4, Panna 14, Salma 53*, Chamely 15, Rumana 7, Irin 5*, Asmavia 0-11, Qanita 1-12, Almas 1-30, Sajida 2-19, Sadia 0-21, Sana 1-30, Urooj 1-10).
Result: Bangladesh won by four wickets.



A PROMISE FULFILLED: Bangladesh women cricketers converge to celebrate the fall of another Pakistan wicket during their second Asia Cup match at the Welegedara Stadium in Kurunegala yesterday. Bangladesh defeated Pakistan by four wickets.



Didier Drogba
(Chelsea's Ivorian superstar)
"Rafael Benitez is a fantastic coach but I was a little disappointed about his comments. The remarks were very personal and football is not all about these critics. I am doing everything to promote English football."

After the Liverpool manager accused him of diving.



SET Max
Indian Premier League
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Live from 3:30pm
Rajasthan Royals v Chennai Super Kings
Live from 7:30pm

ESPN
English Premier League
Arsenal v Everton
Live from 6:25pm
Liverpool v Man City
Live from 8:55pm

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

Narrow win for Narail

Narail and Joyuphat narrowly escaped with close victories while Chittagong and Tangail won comfortably in the opening day matches of the 28th National Cricket Championship yesterday.

Narail (133-9) snuck past Bagerhat (130 all out) by one wicket at the Jessore Stadium while Joyuphat's 138 was more than enough as they bowled out Kurigram for 136 in 38.4 overs at the Shaheed Chandu Stadium in Bogra.

But it was a contrasting story for Chittagong slammed Bandarban by ten wickets in Comilla. Opting to bowl first, the port city bowled out the hilly district for only 68 runs in 29 overs. Chittagong took only 5.4 overs to reach the target with Ashrafu'llah slaying 43.

Tangail (101-4) trounced Narsingdi (100 all out) by six wickets at their home ground while Munshiganj (144-6) beat Madaripur (143 all out) by four wickets at the Faridpur Stadium.

Bangalore clinch thriller



They may have been scraping the bottom of the points table, but the Bangalore Royal Challengers and Deccan Chargers dished out one of the best games of the Indian Premier League (IPL) on Saturday.

In a relatively low-scoring match in which the bowlers from both teams had plenty of say, Bangalore squeezed out a dramatic three-run win -- the second of the tournament and their first at home -- to move to sixth in the points table.

The match ebbed and flowed throughout, both teams had opportunities to take control, and both frittered it away. Deccan, requiring 157 for victory, had the run-chase well in control when the classy Rohit Sharma and VVS

Laxman were involved in a 96-run stand. With 20 deliveries to go, Deccan needed 30 to win with two well-set batsmen at the crease, and seven others to follow. From there, it all went pear-shaped for them.

Rohit had played another sublime innings, showcasing his outstanding talent in bringing up his third half-century of the IPL, but when Jacques Kallis pitched one up, Rohit -- who had carved a four and a six earlier in the over -- could only loft it to long-on. Shahid Afridi's entry should have been good news for Deccan; instead, he made just 1 before Dale Steyn pulled off a superb diving catch at long-on.

Then came two lbw decisions which further queered the pitch: Laxman, who had motored to a 44-ball 52, was given out to a Praveen Kumar delivery which pitched outside leg, and when Scott Styris was given out in similar fashion to Zaheer Khan in the next over, it seemed Bangalore had sealed the

win.

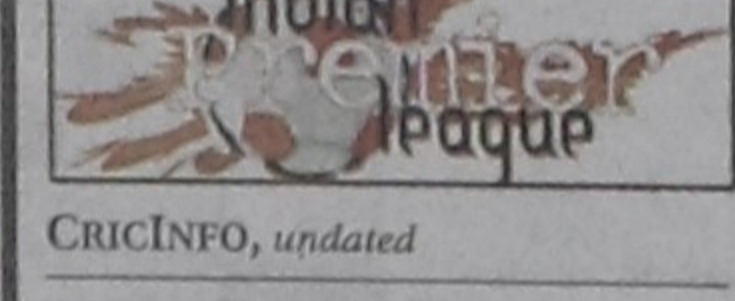
Going into the final over, Deccan needed 20 with Anil Kumble to bowl -- it seemed a lost cause, till Sanjay Bangar struck two magnificent sixes off the third and fourth deliveries, reducing the equation to a nail-biting six off two. Kumble, though, held firm, conceding two singles off the last two balls, and a tense Dravid finally allowed his emotions to show through, high-fiving his teammates. As he said later: "We got out of jail today."

When Rohit and Laxman were at the crease, though, it seemed Bangalore were doomed to another home defeat. After being pegged back by superb opening spells from Steyn, Zaheer and Praveen, during the course of which Adam Gilchrist and Herschelle Gibbs -- their two biggest batting stars -- succumbed, Rohit and Laxman got the run-chase back on track. Rohit's innings was another masterclass,



Ajax goalkeeper Imran Ahmed Shuvo (R) thwarts a full-blooded drive from Mohammedan captain Ariful Haque Prince (C) during their Premier Hockey League match at the Maulana Bhasani National Stadium yesterday. Mohammedan won 3-2.

Delhi snap Chennai streak



A clinical Delhi Daredevils recorded an eight-wicket win to bump their opponents, Chennai Super Kings, off the No. 1 spot and end Mahendra Singh Dhoni's 100 per cent record at the Indian Premier League (IPL) on Friday.

The match was effectively decided by a century stand inside 12 overs between Virender Sehwag and Gautam Gambhir after Chennai's innings floundered in the absence of their Australian batting stars.

Unlike Chennai's top-order, which relied on wild and often mistimed shots to get boundaries, Gambhir and Sehwag scored in masterful fashion. In their partnerships, even in Tests, the two sometimes look like they have a private bet running on who can score

faster. Today Sehwag won it hands down as he raced to his fifty off 24 balls.

With net run-rate deciding league positions, Sehwag wasted no time in teeing off the chase at the venue of his recent triple-century. He slashed Makhaya Ntini for a six off the fourth ball of the innings and followed it up the next over with two more off Manpreet Gony. Joginder Sharma was taken for 19 runs in his first over as Sehwag hit a six and two fours. He fell, when 55 were needed off 52 balls, trying to replicate his first six.

Gambhir may have looked subdued in comparison to Sehwag but he was in a mood to attack as well. He drove and pulled with the confidence that Chennai's batsmen lacked. The two openers offered few chances and never seemed to be in doubt of how to pierce the field.

Chennai clearly missed the power and experience of Matthew Hayden and Michael Hussey,

who'd scored nearly a third of the team's runs in the tournament before this game. Barring Svidyut's half-century, no other innings was memorable. In fact Vidyut's innings was full of unintentional shots -- one, in the 10th over, was a pull edged off Asif that sailed over the keeper for four -- and it was largely memorable because it was his debut.

Credit must go to Delhi's bowlers, though, who bounced back impressively after the initial assault and prevented Chennai from posting a more challenging total. If not for Abbie Morkel's late charge, Chennai would have struggled to get a par score.

Between overs 12 and 16, Delhi conceded only 31 runs as Mohammad Asif, Glenn McGrath and Vijaykumar Yo Mahesh bowled fuller and cut out Dhoni's attempts to step out of the crease and attack. Yo Mahesh, who had conceded two free-hits before bowling Stephen

PCA take slim lead

Pakistan Cricket Academy took a slender 12-run first innings lead over GP-BCB National Cricket Academy (NCA) on the second day of the second four-day game at the Rajshahi Divisional Stadium yesterday.

After part-timer Nayeem Islam had removed tail-ender Wahab Riaz, stumps were drawn for the day with PCA at 276-8 in 82.5 overs in reply to NCA's 264 in the first innings.

PCA built their innings around Azhar Ali, who remained not out on 74 off 171 balls. He struck four boundaries and a six in his knock that spanned more than four hours.

Off-spinner Farhad Hossain took three for 49 but it was Dollar Mahmud who snared two wickets and ran out dangerous opener Ahmed Shehzad, who made 37 off 55 balls. Left-arm spinner Suhawardi Shuvo took 1-68 from 25 overs but new-ball bowlers Nazmul Hossain and Sajidul Islam went wicketless.

Earlier, Anwar Ali had number eleven Sajidul Islam caught by Khuram Manzoor for a duck as Bangladesh were bowled out in the 80th over. Shamsur Rahman stayed unbeaten on 86 off 183 balls.

Zia still on top

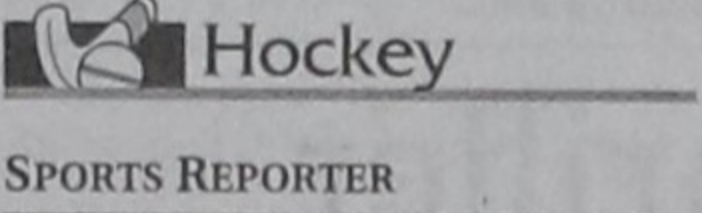
Grand Master Ziaur Rahman maintained solo lead in the 34th National Chess Championship at the federation hall room yesterday.

It took Zia 25 moves in the Tartakower system of Modern Defense to defeat Monir Hossain in a 12th round match. He has now gathered 10 points while International Master Enamul Hossain Rajib was in second position with nine points.

Rajib beat FIDE Master Abu Sufian Shakil, who is in fourth position with 7.5 points.

In today's matches, Zia take on FM Mohammad Javed while Rajib face GM Reefat Bin Sattar.

MSC fashion amazing win



Earlier, it was the Elephant Road club that ruled the roost as Tutul Kumar Nag put them ahead in the 12th minute, through a field goal. Rajib Ahmed doubled the lead as he took advantage of a penalty corner.

Mohammedan earned their second successive win in the competition after they beat Azad Sporting Club 5-0 on Thursday.

In the day's other match, Azad upset an off-colour Dhaka Mariner Youngs Club 3-0 in the afternoon.

Azad took the lead in the 11th minute through Pushkar Khisa, who struck a field goal. On the stroke of half time, Hasan Jubair doubled the margin, also through a field goal.

Belal Hossain confirmed Azad's victory scoring from a penalty corner in the 62nd minute.

Suspension of ban sought by Shoaib

Shoaib Akhtar's lawyers have asked for a suspension of his five-year ban in a bid to allow him to play in the Indian Premier League (IPL) and are set once again to approach the Appellate Tribunal looking into his appeal.

The tribunal reached a decision of sorts this week, allowing Shoaib to play in competitions outside Pakistan, but upholding his five-

year ban for playing in or for Pakistan at least until June when they will revisit his appeal.

It was thought that this verdict would free up Shoaib to play in the IPL and Nasim Ashraf, the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) chairman, even spoke personally to Lalit Modi, the IPL commissioner, to allow him to do so. But the IPL refused, arguing that a player banned from playing for his country would not be eligible to play in the league.

It is believed that Shoaib's legal team had asked for the ban to be suspended at the last hearing so that he could play in the IPL. But the tribunal, by specifically granting him permission to play outside Pakistan, thought there was no need to suspend the ban.

"The order was taken to the IPL because we all thought there was no need to lift the ban for Shoaib to play there," a source close to the player told Cricinfo.

"But the IPL then said that until he remains banned from Pakistan duty, he cannot play in the IPL so an application will now be filed with the tribunal to suspend the ban until such time as the appeal is resolved."

Shoaib was banned for five years in April by the PCB after he criticised the board and its policies at the turn of the year, thus breaching the players' code of conduct.

The punishment, harsh on the surface, took into account past



Grand Master Ziaur Rahman (R) makes a move during his eleventh round game against Monir at the Chess Room of the National Sports Council yesterday.

CONGRATULATIONS

Heartiest Congratulations on behalf of D.S.A International Company to the Renowned Industrialist, Managing Director of Envoy Group, Ex-Popular Football Star and Ex Captain of National Football Team, Bangladesh Mr. **Abdus Salam Murshedi** for being elected as Senior Vice-President of Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF).

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