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Did U Know?

Soviet Union won the very first European Football Championship title beating Yugoslavia 2-1 in 1960.



Marco van Basten

(Dutch football coach)
"To beat the world champions playing football to the last minute - it was for us a very nice game and also a historical game. We have never beaten Italy by three goals." After Netherlands beat Italy in the Euro 2008 first round on Monday.



What to Watch

BTV, NEO Cricket & GEO
Kitply Cup Tri-Series
Bangladesh v India
Live from 3:00pm

ESPN
Euro 2008
Croatia v Germany
Live from 10:00pm
Austria v Poland
Live from 12:45am (Friday)

TEN Sports
West Indies v Australia
Third Test, Day 1
Live from 8:00pm

Pakistan fined for slow over-rate

SPORTS REPORTER

Pakistan captain Shoaib Malik was on Wednesday fined 20 per cent of his match fees while his teammates were docked 10 per cent for slow over-rate in their match against India in the Kitply Cup. Match Referee Jeff Crowe imposed the fine after Pakistan were found two overs short of its target when time allowances were taken into consideration. According to the ICC Code of Conduct regulations governing over-rate penalties, players are fined five per cent of their match fees for every over their side fails to bowl in the allotted time, with the captain fined double that amount. "Although there was a rain interruption late in the innings, which always makes it difficult to keep the overs flowing, Pakistan only bowled 13 overs by the first drinks break and never managed to recover that deficit," Crowe said. The offence is contrary to Section J of the ICC Code of Conduct which relates to slow over-rates.

Pioneer League

UNB, Dhaka

Azizur Rahman struck four times as Golam Mostafa Lane crushed Dhaka Jubo Kishore 12-2 in a West Zone match of the DCC Pioneer Football League at the Outer Stadium yesterday. Apart from Azizur's strikes, Rana, Hasan and Simon scored two goals each while Monir and Javed netted one goal each for the winners. Faisal and Habib scored one goal each for the Jubo. In a Central Zone match at Basabo Tarun Sangha Club ground, Khilgaon Progoti Sangha beat Khilgaon Jubo Sangha 4-0. In the North Zone, Tejgaon Nabataranga edged past Gazipur Ekadash by a solitary goal at the Mohakhali T&T ground.

Can Mashrafe do it again?

BISHWAJIT ROY



It is believed that Mashrafe Bin Mortaza brings his best whenever he gets India as the opponent. The stage is all set for the Bangladesh vice-captain to show another lion-hearted performance when Bangladesh take on ultra-confident India in the third match of the Kitply Cup at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur today. The 24-year-old pace spearhead, who played the pivotal role with man-of-the-match awards in Tigers' two victories against India, has the confidence as he believed that they are capable of making it a third victory against their opponents, who got off to a flying start in the tournament with a 140-run victory over perennial rivals Pakistan.

Another World Cup hero Tamim Iqbal, who stunned cricket pundits with a devastating half-century in Bangladesh's five-wicket victory in Port of Spain, has also said that it is 'a difficult but not impossible task' to script another success in the face of continued failure at the highest level. Their last two one-day meetings at the same venue was also not at all frustrating although they lost the matches under Habibul Bashar's leadership. Still those encouraging facts were not good enough for Bangladesh skipper Mohammad

Ashrafal to think anything other than a target of 'improving in all departments'. The confidence level of Ashrafal's men was so low that they have not even dared to think that they have a chance to make the final. An unexpected win of the Tigers, who lost the first match against Pakistan by 70 runs, can change all earlier predictions of an India-Pakistan final.

But it looks like a daydream for a team who themselves don't want to believe, under the new team management, that they can win the match no matter even if the opponents skipper Mahendra Dhoni said that on a given day any team can win in one-day cricket. "Our main target is to improve in all departments in the last game (!) and play according to the process," said Bangladesh skipper when over-perennial rivals Pakistan.

asked about their target in the second match of the tournament. The young skipper looked totally confused as he changed his notion when asked whether he also believe that their victories against India and the other giants were 'flukes' as many people try to brand it.

"We beat India two times. You can win one match in a fluke but not a number of matches against the giants. It really hurts me because we won the matches on our own credit. Still we can win the match if we play our best cricket no matter against whom we are playing," Ashrafal looked to get back his confidence for a while.

It will be however interesting to see whether the ace batsman continues his same approach of batting what he did against Pakistan in the last match or go back to the days like he played against Australia in Cardiff and South Africa in West Indies. Bangladesh kept the same twelve and they may bring one change in the eleven by bringing in all-rounder Forhad Reza in place of Shahadat Hossain, who was erratic in the first game against Pakistan. Ashrafal also said that they may change the decision if they won the toss this time by batting first as it is getting slower as the ball gets older. India however issued a warning that they will not be complacent against struggling Bangladesh rather they were as focused as they took the other big teams.

LISTEN TO WHAT I SAY: Pace spearhead Mashrafe Bin Mortaza eyes the white ball during practice yesterday at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium ahead of Bangladesh's match against India in the Kitply Cup today. Mashrafe comes into his own whenever he faces the cross-border rivals and his performance can make the difference in today's encounter.

TEAMS

BANGLADESH (from): Tamim Iqbal, Shahriar Nafees, Mohammad Ashrafal (captain), Rokibul Hasan, Alok Kapali, Mushfiqur Rahim, Mahmudullah Riyad, Mashrafe Bin Mortaza, Dollar Mahmud, Abdur Razzak, Forhad Reza and Shahadat Hossain.

INDIA (from): Virender Sehwag, Gautam Gambhir, Yuvraj Singh, Rohit Sharma, Mahendra Dhoni (captain), Suresh Raina, Robin Uthappa, Yusuf Pathan, Irfan Pathan, Piyush Chawla and Manpreet Gony. Umpires: Nadir Shah and Asoka de Silva.

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No clear favourites

AFP, Paris



Holland and Spain may have won the European title once apiece but they have still accrued the reputation of being mere pretenders to the major crowns as both of those came back in 1988 and 1964 respectively.

Yet this time, judged on their first round first game performances, fans of both feel their hour could once again be at hand -- Spain winning 4-1 in their opener against Russia and the Dutch wiping out the world champions Italy 3-0 on Monday. A false dawn? Perhaps, because the Spanish and the Dutch supporters have been here many times before -- flattered to deceive and then coming away with nothing. "Yesterday's game (Monday) was

the most beautiful of my career with the Dutch team," beamed Ruud van Nistelrooy, the Real Madrid forward who took his total to 32 goals in 62 international appearances.

Van Nistelrooy, though, a veteran of several campaigns knows there are many steps to take before they can emulate their compatriots of 1988 -- which included present coach Marco van Basten. "That was just one game and we have to stay focused," said the 31-year-old Real Madrid star.

"We have to play France and Romania, both are very good sides." Spain had recourse to a luxury Villa -- Valencia striker David -- and Russia wilted as he scored a fine hat-trick against them -- the first since Dutch striker Patrick Kluivert scored one against the former Yugoslavia in the Euro 2000 quarter-finals.

Also in Spain's group are defending champions Greece but they will need a miracle if they are

to repeat their 2004 exploits after a brilliant goal from Zlatan Ibrahimovic, his first in 15 games, and a bundled effort from Petter Hansson gave Sweden a 2-0 win in Salzburg. Greece coach Otto Rehhagel held his head in his hands as his team showed nothing to suggest that their success last time out was anything more than a one-off, or even a fluke. Like Spain and Holland, Germany have also thrown down the gauntlet with an impressive 2-0 win over old rivals Poland, Polish-born Lukas Podolski scoring the brace. However, the modest German coach Joachim Loew said any suggestion that Germany would certainly pick off a fourth European title was vastly premature just as it was to predict who would be the winners. "We can't put teams up on a pedestal yet, it is too soon," insisted

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Sixth SAFF soccer next year in India

SPORTS REPORTER

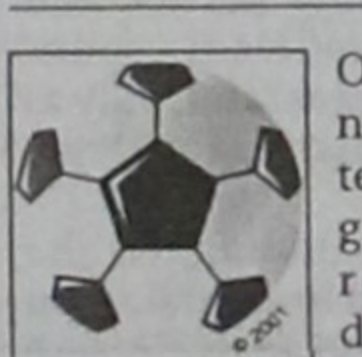
India will host the sixth edition of the SAFF Championship next year, announced the South Asian Football Federation in Colombo yesterday.

SAFF general secretary Sirajul Islam Bachchu, also a member of Bangladesh Football Federation, told the Maldives soccer.com yesterday that it was finalised in the SAFF executive committee meeting three months before. However, Bachchu added that the date will be finalised by the All India Football Federation (AIFF). "The date has not fixed yet. The AIFF has to find a suitable date based on their league," said Sirajul Islam adding that the most feasible date on his opinion would be in December 2009.

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Booters' silent return

SPORTS REPORTER



Only repairing the national football team would not be good enough to revive Bangladesh's status as one of the strongest nations in South Asia where every single team is making progress.

After the disastrous SAFF Championship campaign in Sri Lanka, experts believe the football's governing body needs a fresh outlook under preparation of the national team in near future. While a team like Bhutan, who had no pedigree even in the regional football scene and lost all their all SAFF Championship matches in 2003 and 2005, made the semifinals this year and almost forced holders India into the penalty shootout before losing the knockout match 2-1 in the dying seconds of extra-time yesterday to end gracefully, Bangladesh team's return home yesterday was as silent as possible. Draws against Bhutan (1-1) and Afghanistan (2-2) and a loss to co-hosts Sri Lanka (0-1) are all Bangladesh have after playing three consecutive finals. The 2003 champions, who have now not won an international in 17 attempts in 26 months, never look prepared at all for this event. "We have fallen behind. The difference with other teams is very

distinctive and wide and if our state of football remains same and we don't have domestic leagues in time, we would never be able to beat a team like Bhutan," commented Bangladesh Football Federation president Kazi Salahuddin, who has been planning to appoint foreign coaches of the senior and junior national teams. "Whether the others improve or not does not matter. We have to improve our own condition first," added Salahuddin, a former national footballer and coach. Coach Abu Yusuf, who has been blamed for picking up the wrong squad under influence of a few officials of the BFF's past committee, was quoted by a local newspaper that he did not get the freedom to choose the team in Colombo. Yusuf, who ignored a lot of senior players and chose a young side, was not available for comment last night but national team manager Sheikh Mohammed Aslam denied the allegations. "I have never tried to influence Yusuf bhai during the trip. We have played together and I respect him as a senior player. I don't know whether any other person has done this or not," Aslam told The Daily Star. "As manager, I was involved with the team when it was all built up. I still believe we started our preparation late. If it started in time, there was no reason for us to end like this. "It now looks certain that while everyone has advanced, we just sat back. Also, we did not have quality

players in this team," opined the former national striker. "We have to spread the game throughout the country to find quality footballers and with the South Asian Games coming to Bangladesh next year, we have to start preparing immediately. We will also need foreign coaches." Aslam thought that only the coach or the players should not be blamed for this poor result. "The careless thoughts of the previous BFF committee should be held responsible for this. "Although we had a young team, they were really slow and were never able to cope with the speedy oppositions. Why, because most of our players are not matured. "We missed two vital players -- Joy and Emily -- against Sri Lanka and the inexperienced side failed to cope with the pressure of a must win situation," said Aslam. Captain Aminul Haque, who was dropped for the last game, admitted that the standard of Bangladesh has really deteriorated. "We have never played this bad in any tournament. In fact, nowhere in the world a team is shuffled so much. We had just five-senior players in the side and that is one of reasons behind this failure," said the goalkeeper. "After our last match, Joy told in a meeting that the national team jersey does not hold any weight any more. I agree with his comments. These days, I feel that any one can get a national jersey."

SCORE AGAINST DANDRUFF WITH CONFIDENCE
CLEAR men
NO DANDRUFF



Swedish supporters cheer in the stands before their match against Greece in Salzburg on Tuesday.

Sabrina sails, Asif fails

SPORTS REPORTER

Sabrina Sultana of Dhaka Rifles Club clinched the top slot in the Women's 22 Rifles Prone on the second day of the 22nd National Shooting Championship at the BKSP in Savar yesterday. Sabrina, who represented Bangladesh in the Sydney Olympics in 2000, scored 568 to win the top slot today. Tripti Dutta of BKSP and Nahid Sultana of Ansar-VDP became second and third scoring 567 and 564 points respectively. But Commonwealth and SAF Games gold medalist Asif Hossain Khan of Dhaka Rifles Club finished

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Sachin going to Lashings

CRICINFO, undated

Lashings have announced that Sachin Tendulkar has agreed to play three matches for the club after the completion of the Asia Cup later this month. His short stint at Lashings is scheduled to begin at Eastbourne College on June 24 with his other two appearances likely to be against St Bede's School in Sussex on June 27 and the Leigh Technology Academy on July 4. Tendulkar played for the club in 2006 when coming back from an elbow injury.

AHF CUP IN SINGAPORE

Bangladesh fly off tonight

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh national hockey team leave Dhaka tonight for Singapore to take part in the third Men's AHF Cup Hockey tournament. Bangladesh will compete in the qualifying round of the Asia Cup competition to be held in Singapore from June 14 to 22 eyeing for the title of the nine-team championship. But the hockey team are yet to get visa from the Singapore embassy of Dhaka, but have been assured of it on Thursday morning to fly the same night. Bangladesh Hockey Federation general secretary Sajed Adel hoped that the team can fly off tonight. "We are expecting the visa tomorrow (Thursday) morning, and I hope our team will fly the same night," said Adel. "We are very lucky this time that the flight schedule of Bangladesh Biman has been rescheduled for Thursday night changing its morning schedule (10:30 am). This gives us an opportunity to fly the same night," he added. Dhaka Bank Limited, who signed a deal with the hockey federation recently to be the "partner in progress" of Bangladesh

hockey for one year, also sponsored the national team's trip to Singapore providing Tk 20 lakh of the estimated cost of Tk 24 lakh. Earlier, President of the federation and Air Force Chief Air Marshall SM Ziaur Rahman at a press conference on Monday expressed his purpose. "Our team will go for the championship. I hope Bangladesh will be the champions, at least they finish runners-up in the meet," said the president. Bangladesh have been placed in Pool A of the Asia Cup Hockey with hosts Singapore, Chinese Taipei, Uzbekistan and Brunei while Pool B comprises of Hong Kong, Sri Lanka, Oman and Thailand. Bangladesh will play Brunei on June 14, Chinese Taipei on June 15, Singapore on June 18 and round off their group matches against Uzbekistan on June 18. Of the nine teams taking part in the meet, four will qualify for the Asia Cup Hockey. SQUAD Mahbubullah Shakil, Mehrab Hossain Kiron, Mamunur Rahman Chayan, Isa Mia, Asaduzzaman Chandan, Moshirur Rahman Biplob, Ferdous Goldar, Shahidullah Titu.

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