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Abahani held

SPORTS REPORTER

Abahani's only preparation match ahead of this month's AFC President's Cup ended in a draw when the Dhaka giants were held 1-1 by Narayanganj Khelwar Kalyan Samity yesterday.

The Bangladesh professional league champions, who leave Dhaka tomorrow to play the AFC club tournament in Kuala Lumpur, went ahead from a penalty converted by striker Emily after eight minutes at the Narayanganj Osmani Stadium.

Mithun Chowdhury scored level for the home side in the 19th minute.

Abahani play Nepal Police Club on June 22, Tajikistan champions Regar-TadAZ on June 26 and Pakistan WAPDA on June 26.

Teammates fret over Asif's fate

PTI, Karachi

Mohammad Asif's prolonged detention in Dubai has left the entire Pakistani cricket team concerned, says coach Geoff Lawson, who wants to have the embattled pacer back in the side as soon as he is released.

Asif has been in detention after being caught with a small quantity of contraband drugs at the Dubai International Airport on June 1.

Lawson said Pakistani players might be busy celebrating their ODI tri-series win over India but they are equally concerned about their detained teammate.

"We are praying and hoping for his early release and I would love to see Asif back in the side," Lawson told reporters after reaching Lahore from Dhaka.

"Everyone in the team has been talking about him not only as a cricketer but also as a person as well," he added.

Although impressed with Sohail Tanvir and Wahab Riaz, who

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Did U Know?

Michel Platini of France became the highest scorer in the Euro history. He scored 9 goals in 1984.



Fatih Terim

(Turkey football coach)
"I am a person who never loses hope. I have seen many things happen in the last minutes of game, that is the beauty of football."
After his side's stunning late win over the Czech Republic in the Euro 2008 on Sunday.



STAR Cricket

England v New Zealand
Second ODI
Live from 3:45pm

ESPN
Sportscentre India
Sports News
Live at 8:30pm
Euro 2008
Greece v Spain
Live from 12:45am (Thursday)

STAR Sports
Euro 2008
Russia v Sweden
Live from 12:45am (Thursday)

Channel i
World Cup Qualifier
Brazil v Argentina
Live from 5:50am (Thursday)

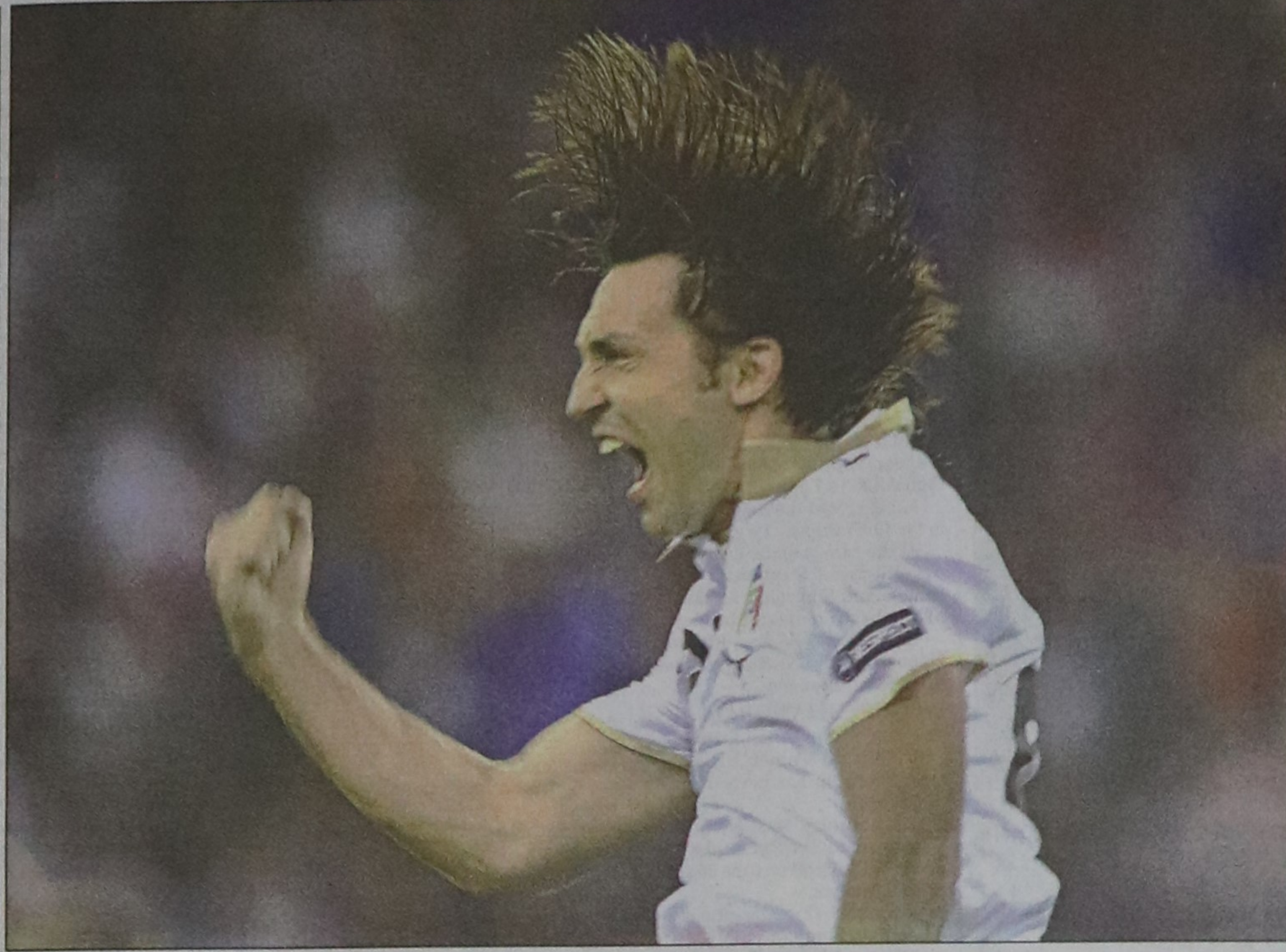


PHOTO: AFP

Playmaker Andrea Pirlo pumps his fist after his penalty gave Italy the lead against France in their do-or-die Euro 2008 match at the Letzigrund Stadium in Zurich last night.

SCORE AGAINST DANDRUFF WITH CONFIDENCE

CLEAR men

NO DANDRUFF

Dutch make it 3 out of 3

AFP, Berne

Holland marched into the quarter-finals of Euro 2008 with a hundred per cent record in group C and their momentum intact after their reserves stroled to a 2-0 victory over Romania here on Tuesday.

A poacher's goal from Klaas Jan Huntelaar just after half-time and Robin van Persie's late strike sealed the win over opponents who were woefully devoid of ambition.

Needing to win to be sure of staying in the competition, Victor Piturca's side's only concern appeared to be to avoid the kind of mauling the Dutch had handed out to France and Italy in their first two group matches.

That was never on the cards with only rightback Khalid Boulahrouz and the defensive midfielder Orlando Engelaar surviving from the Dutch side that had started the 4-1 demolition of France.

But Marco van Basten's side were always in control and would have ended the contest much

earlier if Huntelaar and Arjen Robben, who was withdrawn after an hour, had taken their first-half chances.

Romania's cutting edge was blunted by captain Cristian Chivu being forced to drop back into a holding role in midfield as a result of the serious eye injury suffered by teammate Mirel Radoi in the 1-1 draw with Italy.

They were also missing suspended centreback Dorin Goian but none of that amounted to an excuse for an absurdly cautious approach which saw every outfield player regularly behind the ball as the Dutch probed for an opening.

The first of those came after 19 minutes, when Engelaar's cross found van Persie in space just beyond the back post, the Arsenal forward mistiming his jump and sending a header high into the crowd.

Mutu then saw a close range effort spin across the goalmouth after a last-ditch intervention by his marker, Wilfred Bouma, before van Persie headed another inviting Engelaar cross off target.

Mutu and Cosmin Cocis both tried their luck from distance without troubling stand-in goalkeeper Maarten Stekelenburg

before the Dutch spurned two gilt-edged chances to take the lead in quick succession.

Sent into the box by Ibrahim Afellay's clever angled pass, Boulahrouz teed up Huntelaar in the 33rd minute but the striker, so prolific for Ajax, appeared edgy as he lifted his shot over the bar from 12 yards.

Huntelaar did better a few minutes later, helping Demy de Zeeuw's pass into the path of Arjen Robben with a deft first-time flick. With only Bodan Lobont to beat, the Real Madrid winger went for an equally cute finish and his strike slipped and inch to the left of the goalkeeper's right-hand post.

Romania's best chance of the first-half came a minute from the break. Razvan Rat made it to the byline and delivered an acute blast for Paul Codrea, who was blasted over from just inside the box.

It took a fine save from Lobont to deny van Persie three minutes after the restart and Holland's superiority finally told in the 54th minute.

Afellay's cross from the right was flicked on by Engelaar and, this time, Huntelaar demonstrated his

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'Seniors must serve'

Cricket

AFP, Chester-le-Street

New Zealand captain Daniel Vettori has called on his squad's senior players to help his side salvage something from a tour of England which threatens to end without an international victory.

Sunday's 114-run thrashing in the first one-day international here at the Riverside came hot on the heels of Friday's equally lopsided nine-wicket reverse in a Twenty20 international at Old Trafford.

Earlier this month England sealed a 2-0 Test series win over New Zealand with a crushing innings and nine run victory at Trent Bridge.

Nevertheless World Cup semi-finalists New Zealand went into the one-day series, which continues at Edgbaston on Wednesday, with high hopes.

But left-arm spinner Vettori, himself the most experienced player in the squad, believes the senior men, who include all-rounder Scott Styris, pace bowler Kyle Mills and keeper-batsman

and we need our bowlers to lift their performance."

New Zealand, in a bid to bolster their squad and provide cover for Oram, who is unlikely to be fit before the third one-day international in Bristol on Saturday at the earliest, called up Grant Elliott from club cricket in Surrey, south-east England, on Monday.

The South Africa-born all-rounder, who could go straight into the side at Edgbaston, made his Test debut against England in Napier earlier this year but took only one wicket and scored just 10 runs in two innings.

"Jacob's one of the best one-day players in the world so every time you take a guy like that out of your side it's a real loss," said Vettori.

"Not only would his steadiness with the ball have come in handy but also his power with the bat."

"I think he'll struggle for the next game and we'll just push him as hard as we can for the following one in Bristol."

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Italy into last 8

AFP, Zurich



World champions Italy beat old foes France 2-0 here on Tuesday to go through to the Euro 2008 quarter-finals as Group C runners up with a helping hand from Holland whilst their rivals and 2006 World Cup finalists exited.

The French endured a wretched night, suffering two major blows in the first 25 minutes, with first star midfielder Franck Ribery stretchered off then Eric Abidal red-carded with Andrea Pirlo converting the penalty.

Daniele de Rossi added Italy's second after the break to send the world champions on a last eight date with Spain in Vienna on Sunday.

The win would have been inconsequential if the Romanians had beaten Holland, but the Dutch instead beat Romania 2-0 to make it three wins out of three.

For Italy, searching for their first European title in 40 years, this victory was consolation after the world champions failed to get past the first round at Euro 2000.

For France elimination, with just one goal scored, was the unwelcome prize for a campaign

dogged by reported internal strife, player fatigue and controversy over injured captain Patrick Vieira.

This game was billed as 'our final' by France manager Raymond Domenech, and it could well be his with 1998 French World Cup winner Emmanuel Petit for one saying heads should roll.

Domenech made three changes from the side swept aside by Holland, with defenders Lilian Thuram and Willy Sagnol replaced by Abidal and Francois Clerc, and Karim Benzema joining Thierry Henry in attack with midfielder Florent Malouda dropping to the bench. Roberto Donadoni unveiled an attacking line-up, dropping Alessandro del Piero in favour of Euro 2008 debutant Antonio Cassano and picking Gennaro Gattuso in favour of Mauro Camoranesi in midfield.

At kick-off a perfect rainbow enveloped the Letzigrund stadium as both teams went in search of their pot of gold.

As early as the third minute Italy had a live chance when Luca Toni

latched on to a ball punted up field from deep in the Italian defence but the Bayern Munich striker's finish lacked direction.

Shortly after France lost Ribery, their best player up to now.

Toni's Bayern teammate was stretchered off on a buggy after going over on his left ankle in a tackle on Gianluca Zambrotta.

The midfielder's place was taken by Samir Nasri.

Play resumed with a corner for Italy and only quick thinking by France defender Claude Makelele kept out Christian Panucci's low angled header.

Coupet then did well to deny Pirlo's curling 20-metre freekick from the right flank.

The game's turning point came in the 24th minute when Toni, at full stretch trying to latch on to a ball, was tackled and felled from behind by Abidal in the box.

Slovakian referee Lubos Michel had no hesitation in pulling out a red card, with Pirlo blasting his shot high into the left hand corner.

Abidal's sending off evoked wretched memories for France of the last time these two countries met in a major competition, in the World Cup final, when Zinedine Zidane was given his marching orders for headbutting Marco Materazzi.

That though came in the closing

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GROUP C TABLE

TEAM	P	W	D	L	GF	GA	Pts
Netherlands	3	3	0	0	9	1	9
Italy	3	1	1	1	4	4	4
Romania	3	0	2	1	3	2	2
France	3	0	1	2	1	6	1

Yusuf wants to leave

Foreign coach not now

Football

SPORTS REPORTER

Abu Yusuf has asked the Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) to relieve him of his duties as the federation coach following the national team's disastrous performance in the recently concluded SAFF Championship.

Yusuf was appointed as one of the four BFF coaches in March and the former national footballer was immediately given charge of the national team for two international tournaments, the AFC Challenge Cup qualifiers in Kyrgyzstan and the fifth SAFF Championship in Maldives and Sri Lanka.

Yusuf, who was told to submit a report of the team's performance in the last three and a half months to the BFF by today, also submitted a letter requesting his release with the report on Monday night to BFF president Kazi Salahuddin.

"I was only given the national team for two tournaments and it was over as soon as the SAFF ended. However, I want to be relieved as a BFF coach," Yusuf told the Daily Star last night.

"My previous assignments for the BFF were contract basis but this time, I was officially appointed as a BFF coach along with three others as part of its development programme."

"I don't want to continue because I feel the total management at the BFF does not favour any coach."

"It happened before with foreign coaches and no one in the past has signed off properly. It also happened to me."

"I admit the failure to give the national team result but I would also add that the atmosphere is not coach-friendly. I expected better from the new BFF committee but it has yet to change the tradition," complained the former centre-back adding that he did not have the freedom while running the show.



ABU YUSUF

"I was not able to work according to my wish or plans. However, I don't want to comment any more because I have written all the things I remember in my report."

"The players and coaches are usually made scapegoats to hide the real scene. But I hope that it would not happen again."

"The BFF now has a leader like Salahuddin bhai who was a great

player. I hope he would be able to change things and provide coaches the right environment to work in the future," added the outgoing coach who would now consider return to the domestic scene.

"Before the BFF job, I had offers from Mohammedan, Rahmatganj and Sheikh Russel for the professional league. I could join any of them if the offers are still open."

Bangladesh finished last in a three-team Challenge Cup qualifying group after drawing 1-1 with eventual winners Afghanistan and losing 2-0 to hosts Kyrgyzstan. In the SAFF, they finished third in the group stage behind Sri Lanka and Bhutan who reached the semi-finals. Bangladesh drew their opener with Bhutan 1-1, held Afghanistan 2-2 before losing to the Lankans by a solitary goal.

Although BFF chief Salahuddin has already announced he would import coaches for the senior and junior national teams, it seems that a foreign coach's arrival would be delayed by at least six months.

Not only the negotiation with a foreign coach would take some time but the BFF also does not have enough funds to appoint foreign coaches right at the moment.

Salahuddin, a player-turned national coach, wants to take some time before choosing and had admitted just a day before Yusuf's decision that the BFF did not have much candidates in hand.

It looks certain that Bangladesh will play two international tournaments in Indonesia and Malaysia in

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Tigers opener Shahriar Nafees shapes to pull Shahadat Hossain's short ball during a practice match at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR