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Aussies name hockey squad

AFP, Sydney

Eight members of the gold medal-winning Athens line-up were Thursday named in the Australian men's field hockey team along with eight Olympic debutants for next month's Beijing Games.

Travis Brooks, Liam De Young, Jamie Dwyer, Bevan George, Robert Hammond, Mark Knowles, Grant Schubert and Matthew Wells all played in the 2-1 sudden-death win over the Netherlands in the 2004 Athens final.

Defending champions Australia go into the Olympics at the top of the world rankings after their record-equalling ninth Champions Trophy title wins in the Netherlands last month.

Coach Barry Dancer said the team's recent international performances had given them confidence and belief for Beijing.

"Knowing how difficult it will be and knowing the landscape in Beijing will be different to what we have faced so far this year, we will be making every effort in the next three to four weeks to make sure that we're the best prepared team," Dancer said Thursday.

Dwyer, who scored the gold medal-winning goal in Athens, is

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Bangladesh A's 2nd 3-dayer today

SPORTS REPORTER

A new look Bangladesh A face Warwickshire in their second three-day match at Edgbaston in Birmingham today.

National cricketers Tamim Iqbal, Nazimuddin, Rokibul Hasan, Mushfiqur Rahim, Mosharrar Hossain, Sajidul Islam and Dollar Mahmud joined the team.

They will replace Imrul Kayes, Sahagir Hossain, Nadif Chowdhury, Suhrawardi Shuvo, Mahbubul Alam, Arafat Sunny and Farhad Hossain.

All-rounder Shakib Al Hasan is likely to fly for England on July 11 after completion of his HSC examinations.

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Did U Know?

There are 639 players who have represented England in Tests followed by Australia who have 401 Test players.



STAR Cricket

England v South Africa
First Test, Day Two
Live from 4:00pm



Graeme Smith

(South Africa cricket captain)
"Kevin and I would get on a lot better [he kept his mouth shut]. While talking about his long running verbal battle with England batsman Kevin Pietersen."

Triple hit peg Eng back

Cricket

AFP, London

South Africa hit back with three wickets in quick succession as they started to justify captain Graeme Smith's decision to field in the first Test against England at Lord's here Thursday.

England, at tea on the first day, were 163 for three.

They had been 114 without loss, following a stand between left-handed openers Andrew Strauss and Alastair Cook which saw both batsmen play some fine shots as well as survive the odd scare.

But England then lost three wickets for three runs in 13 balls to be 117 for three as the Proteas, on a pitch that appeared to be getting quicker as latent moisture evaporated following Wednesday's persistent rain.

Kevin Pietersen, playing his first Test against the land of his birth, was 13 not out having narrowly avoided being run out while still on nought before being hit on the head by a Dale Steyn bouncer.

Ian Bell, off the mark with a

textbook cover-driven four off Morne Morkel, was unbeaten on 33 after stanching the flow of wickets with five boundaries in all so far in his innings.

England, 71 without loss at lunch, saw Strauss, in his 50th Test and on his Middlesex home ground, drive Morkel down the ground to bring up the century stand for the first wicket.

Cook then completed a 92-ball fifty with nine fours.

But Strauss, typically strong square of the wicket, fell just short of the landmark. The Johannesburg-born batsman had made 44 in nearly three hours when he was lbw to Morkel.

Replays suggested the ball may have just pitched outside leg-stump but, with Strauss moving across his crease, Australian umpire Daryl Harper didn't take long to give him out.

But there was absolutely no doubt about the next wicket when a full, 88mph delivery from Steyn beat Michael Vaughan's attempted defensive stroke and knocked back the England captain's off-and-middle stumps, the Yorkshire batsman out for just two.

Then five balls later, 117 for two became 117 for three when a short ball from the 6ft 6in Morkel proved too hot for Cook to handle.

Trying to turn it leg-side, Cook succeeded only in spooning a gentle catch to AB de Villiers in the slips and was out for 60.

Much hype has surrounded Pietersen's debut Test innings against the Proteas following his longstanding criticisms of the South African cricket system made after he turned his back on the country in protest at a racial quota system he said was hampering his progress.

His remarks had proved a particularly sore point for Smith, labelled a "muppet" in Pietersen's autobiography.

South Africa nearly had the England wicket they crave above all others when Pietersen, off his second ball, set off for a highly risky single only for Makhaya Ntini's throw from mid-on to miss the stumps with the batsman well short of his ground.

SCOREBOARD

Scoreboard at tea on the first day of the first Test between England and

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England opener Andrew Strauss leaves alone a rising delivery from South Africa paceman Dale Steyn (not in the picture) on the opening day of the first Test at Lord's yesterday.

Waiting for the fund

Football

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) is looking for a sponsor who will support its 9-figure budget for one year and the quest is likely to be accomplished within this month.

The newly elected BFF executive committee, led by Kazi Salahuddin, has promised a lot but having taken charge of a cash-starved federation, it has given top priority on accumulating fund to implement its programmes.

"To run all the activities of the federation, we need flow of cash throughout the year. So we are concentrating on a corporate house which will be our partner in progress. That is why we are not negotiating with individual sponsors at the moment," told BFF's

finance committee chairman Anwarul Hoque Helal yesterday.

Helal, who was general secretary of the previous BFF executive body but resigned his post before completing the term, got his full committee only on Wednesday.

"Although we have yet to officially start the (finance) committee activities, the (BFF) president has been working from the start to lure a sponsor. I am aware of all the progresses and we hope to reach an agreement within 15 to 20 days," the BFF member said.

"Once we secure the main sponsor we will go for co-sponsors."

It is expected that to get maximum mileage, the sponsors would want the title rights of all tournaments but their money would also be put into development works.

"Tournaments are important but what we really want to do at this stage is to get into the grassroots. We will

restart the VisionAsia programme as soon as possible. These would be our models to spread the programme countrywide.

"The government might organise tournaments in districts but the real development lies in starting lone competitions. So we are targeting school leagues in two or three districts and introduce city leagues consequently.

"A tournament gives a team or players the chance to play just one or two matches but it never reflects the real strength. We need to go into longer version and it would be expensive," the finance committee boss opined.

"So we are waiting for the money to go into action."

The BFF started with a deficit of about Tk 40 lakh but Helal said there was no use lingering in the past.

"When the previous committee

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A ground worker mowing grass at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday as part of the venue's preparation for this month's Federation Cup which will kick off the domestic football season.

PHOTO: STAR

AGA KHAN GOLD CUP SIC happy about proposed budget

SPORTS REPORTER

The Aga Khan Gold Cup, once a top-ranked club tournament in Asia, looks certain to return to the calendar of Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) after the federation high-ups got positive response from the patrons yesterday.

Prince Karim Aga Khan's visit to Dhaka last May raised hopes of revival of the tournament after over a quarter of a century.

The Shia Islamic Council (SIC), a Bangladeshi organisation of followers of Prince Aga Khan, which represents the spiritual leader, all but endorsed the BFF's proposed Tk 4-crore budget to hold the tournament.

Aga Khan, who lives in Paris, has wrested the responsibility on SIC leader Hossain Haider Ali to negotiate with the BFF.

"Nothing's final but the meeting proved that they are positive about the tournament," informed Kazi Nabil Ahmed, who attended the meeting beside fellow BFF vice-presidents Badal Roy and Shawkat Ali Jahangir.

"They wanted to know what would be the status of this tournament if it runs for the next five years

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School chess

SPORTS REPORTER

Indian duo Mohona Sengupta and Swati Majumder jointly led the girls' group in the 10th Standard Chartered School chess tournament after three rounds yesterday.

Mohona beat Reshama while Swati defeated Tani at the federation hall-room to share the lead with maximum three points.

Eleven players had full three points after third round in the boys' (Class XI-X) group while six topped the table in the junior section (KG-Class V), also with three points.

'Yellow card good idea'

Cricket

INTERNET, undated

Before breakfast and travelling to Lord's Wednesday morning, Billy Bowden will turn to the scriptures for 15 to 30 minutes' inspiration on how he can lead a better life as a human being as well as an umpire. If he feels he has let himself down the previous day, that length of time will be doubled.

His wife, Jenny, will then ensure that he has the relevant cereals and sweeteners to withstand a day in the middle and by 9am he will be assessing the prospects of play with Daryl Harper, his colleague, and all manner of officials. His first Test match at Headquarters will be a long but, he trusts, rewarding five days.

Bowden is officiating in his 47th Test, but his first at Lord's. He will do so in honour of his mother, Jeanette, who died three weeks ago.

"I had to make certain I was prepared," the New Zealander said Wednesday. "I did not want to let Daryl down. The first hour will be difficult and there will be a few emotional moments. Mum was everything to me, whether I was involved in sport or academic work, and I am only glad she knew that I would be standing at Lord's."

Bowden's preparation is meticulous. He was in bed last night by 11pm, ensuring that he had seven hours sleep, in a hotel room away from the traffic. He dislikes the taste of alcohol and drinks up to five 300ml bottles of water during a day's play. He eschews coffee, cola or any other form of caffeine. Definitely no Red Bull. "I am not KP; I am hyper enough already" - and he will not have any liquids between 10.30am and the start of play, so that he does not have to go off the field to the lavatory. Superstitious? "None. I have my Christian faith to keep me strong," he said.

Bowden's Christian beliefs, hidden in part beneath his sense of theatricality, give him the capacity to forgive just about everything and everyone on the pitch. His father, Marcus, is a clergyman and he does not dislike any cricketer - he simply grades them all in degrees of niceness, with Adam Gilchrist at the top. "I said to him that if he ever let me down, I would retire from Test cricket," Bowden said. "I have never got into that situation with any other player. I believed in him because he earned my respect."

His prime concern is sledging and to that end he would like to see yellow and red cards given a try. "Sledging was out of control for a few years," he said. "The spirit of the game is just as important as the Laws and penalising players in this way would put pressure on their teammates and captain. If we do not give it a go, we shall never know if it will work."

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LOCAL SNIPPETS

SPORTS REPORTER

A corporate five-a-side indoor football competition kicks off at the STM hall premises in Uttara today. The tournament, sponsored by Ascent Group, is being organised by Excalibur Entertainment. The final of the competition will be held on July 18.

The participating teams are Ispahani, Bangla Cat, Bangla Trac Communications, Bitopi, IDLC, Grey Advertising, Banglalink, Citycell, Gemcon, United Leasing Company, HSBC, Multimode Group, Radio Foorti, IIDFC, Brac Bank, Secorex, Aqua Paints, Flora Telecom, Beximco Pharma, Nokia, IPDC, Rahimafrooz, Ogilvy & Mather, Union Group, Daily New Age, Apollo Hospitals, Vision Group, GSP Finance and Ascent Group.

FED CUP BASKETBALL

BKSP take on Hornets Sporting Club in one of four matches on the opening day of the Federation Cup basketball tournament at the Dhanmondi Gymnasium today. Flame Boys face Bangladesh Police, Josephites are up against Gregs Club and the day will be rounded off with the Rangers-Dhuketu tie.

GAIBANDHA CRICKET

Our correspondent adds: Anwar Smriti Sangsad beat Saud Smriti Sangsad by 38 runs in the second division cricket league at the local stadium here.

Anwar were bowled out for 117 in 20 overs and then later bowled out Saud for 83 in 17 overs. In the other match, Jabbar Smriti Sangsad defeated Jagarani KC by six wickets.

OPEN SQUASH

UNB adds: League leader Bhola Lal of Sonargaon Hotel tasted his first defeat in the Premier Division of the Delta Life National Squash tournament when he suffered a straight set loss to Masud Rana of Dhaka Army Club at the Dhaka Club.

In the day's other match, Basundhara Group's Swapan Parvez beat Bishunath of Gulshan Club by the same margin. Despite the day's defeat, Bhola Lal retained the top slot with 21 points while Swapan was second with 19 points and Masud Rana third with 18.

SUMMER BADMINTON

The Sadat Smriti Summer Open badminton competition will begin at the NSC Wooden Floor Gymnasium on July 20. The competition will be

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Of the happy lightweight

AFP, Singapore



Powerhouse nations like China, the United States and Russia might grab all the Olympic gold medal attention but the world's sporting minnows plan to grab at least some of the limelight.

While some nations might whinge about winning dozens of medals, others will be glad of just one - and a bronze at that.

More than 80 countries competing in Beijing have never before been on the Olympic podium. For a myriad of reasons - political, geographical, financial - their sporting prowess has never matured.

Tiny Brunei might be oil rich but when it comes to producing athletes, it is lacking big time. The small monarchy on the island of Borneo will be competing in its fifth Summer Olympics but will inevitably go home empty-handed.

Bhutan is bigger than Brunei but remains one of the most

secluded countries in the world, tucked between Asian heavyweights China and India.

Their national sport is archery - competitions are held regularly in villages throughout the monarchy - and they have an outside chance after six Games with no joy.

The Maldives, like Brunei, has a population of less than 400,000 and has similarly lacked medals. Being a series of tropical islands it is not surprising that their best hope this year is in swimming.

Cambodia may not be a minnow in population terms, but it remains that way in the sporting arena.

Its troubled history meant that sport was put on hold for most of the 1970s and 1980s, before it once again took part in the Olympics in 1996.

Boxing is its forte and 15 athletes will be in Beijing, including swimmer Hem Thon Ponleud and his 16-year-old niece Hem Thon Vitiny.

Timor-Leste, one of the world's poorest countries, became the first new nation of the 21st century when it declared independence from Indonesia in 2002, just in time to send a team to Athens.

Its key sports are boxing, weightlifting, taekwondo and athletics.

But severe shortages of money, facilities and equipment means the nation faces more obstacles than most in achieving its Olympic dream, and only marathon runners Antonio Ramos and Mariana Diaz Jimenez will be in Beijing.

"In all the other sports we cannot qualify to participate in Beijing. Sport is not a priority for the government of East Timor and our infrastructure is non-existent," said Joao Carrascalao, the head of Timor's Olympic committee.

"We don't have any hope of winning the marathon, but to finish the marathon is already an achievement."

War-torn Iraq is sending a team of six athletes under the Olympic flag in lieu of their own after a spat with the International Olympic Committee last month led to the suspension of Iraq's Olympic committee.

Like other countries, Iraq suffers from a lack of support for sport. "The attention and the support that athletes at the national level are supposed to get is absent,

morally, physically and materially. It has had a huge impact on me," said weightlifter Sawara Mohammed, one of the competitors.

Like many Asian nations, Africa has its fair share on non-achievers. While countries like Ethiopia and Kenya have a tradition of churning out world-beating distance runners, the vast majority of Africa nations have never produced the goods.

This includes Angola, Chad, Gambia, Liberia, and Malawi.

Rwanda is another lacking the means to focus on sport, whose main medal hopes are Dieudonne Disi in the 10,000m and Epiphany Nyirabareme in the women's marathon. Nigeria will be looking towards jukoda Vivian Yusuf.

Other countries never to have made the podium include Bolivia, Cook Islands, Jordan, Myanmar, Nicaragua, Papua New Guinea, Tajikistan, Vanuatu, and Yemen.

A handful of nations have won just one bronze medal since the Games started in 1896, including Iraq, Kuwait, Niger, Kyrgyzstan, and Guyana.

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A giant banner with the Olympic slogan "One World One Dream" is on display on a building in Beijing on Thursday, four weeks before the quadrangular sporting extravaganza gets underway in the Chinese capital.

PHOTO: AFP