



Action from yesterday's match between Bangladesh Rifles and Cute during the Design Zone 2nd Office Handball League at the outer stadium ground.

PHOTO: STAR

Office handball

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh Rifles registered their second successive win in the Design Zone 2nd Office Handball League when they beat Cute 42-27 at the outer stadium handball ground yesterday.

The holders led the first half 23-10.

Kamrul was the top-scorer for the winners with seven goals while Jamal netted five. Saidur scored 10 goals for the losers while Asad netted five.

Rifles, Police, Prisons Directorate and Cute are taking part in the league basis and two top teams will play in the final on July 30.

Prisons Directorate face Cute at the same venue today.

English winners to play Stanford

AFP, London

English cricket's Twenty20 Cup winners will be invited to play in the latest creation of American billionaire Sir Allen Stanford, England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) chief executive David Collier said Friday.

Stanford has already announced a 10 million pounds winner-takes-all Twenty20 match between England and a West Indies select XI and now he is planning a Stanford Super Series in the Caribbean.

Kent, Essex, Durham and Middlesex, who take part in the English finals on Saturday, will also be competing for the chance to join the Super Series in which Trinidad and Tobago will play in matches against England and the Stanford Super Stars.

Collier believes Stanford's brainchild can take county cricket to another level as it gives the domestic champions a taste of international action.

"It's a great opportunity for the champions to play Trinidad and Tobago," Collier said. "A real opportunity to link the domestic game with international game."

Collier also confirmed that there would be no appearance fees on offer for England players in their winner-takes-all clash.

West Indies legend Richie Richardson added: "It's going to create interest and enthusiasm that's been lacking in West Indies cricket."

Murali sinks

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M Jayawardene c Karthik b Sharma	136
Samaraweera c Laxman b Zaheer	127
Dilshan not out	125
P Jayawardene c Sharma b Harbhajan	30
Vaas not out	22
Extras: (b-4, lb-5, nb-18, w-3)	30
Total: (For six wickets in 162 overs)	600
Did not bat: Kulasekara, Mendis, Muralidaran	
Fall of wickets: 1-7, 2-57, 3-212, 4-360, 5-454, 6-545.	

Bowler	O	M	R	W
Zaheer	37	2	156	2
Sharma	33	4	124	2
Ganguly	8	1	24	0
Harbhajan	43	2	149	2
Kumble	37	4	121	0
Swamy	4	0	17	0

INDIA: First innings
 Gambhir c Samaraweera b Muralidaran 39
 Sehwag c Warnapura b Kulasekara 25
 Dravid b Mendis 14
 Tendulkar b Muralidaran 27
 Ganguly c Kulasekara b Muralidaran 23
 Laxman not out 19
 Karthik c and b Muralidaran 1
 Kumble not out 1
 Extras: (lb-2)
 Total: (For six wickets in 45 overs) 159
 To bat: Harbhajan, Zaheer, Sharma.
 Fall of wicket: 1-36, 2-79, 3-79, 4-123, 5-138, 6-147.

Bowler	O	M	R	W
Vaas	5	0	23	0
Kulasekara	7	0	38	1
Mendis	18	3	58	1
Muralidaran	15	3	38	4

Nadal, Djokovic move on

Tennis

AFP, Toronto

Number two Rafael Nadal and third-ranked Novak Djokovic were smelling blood Thursday, less than 24 hours after Roger Federer's untimely second-round ouster at the ATP Toronto Masters Series event.

The pursuing pair - Nadal in the runaway lead between them - are moving toward a possible changing of the guard at the top of tennis after 234 weeks of the Swiss reign.

Djokovic staked his continuing claim, coming back after a Wimbledon second-round elimination, to reach the quarterfinals with a defeat of Swede Robin Soderling 6-4, 6-4.

Nadal secured easy passage over Russian Igor Andreev 6-2, 7-6 (7/1), winning his 58th match of the season as he aims for a seventh title of 2008.

"It was much better for me than yesterday," said Nadal. "I'm happy to get to the quarter-finals for the first time in Toronto."

"I played well today, but I'll have to work on my break points," he added after converting on only two of nine.

Nothing can happen at the summit this week, according to the ATP number crunchers.

Nadal currently stands 770 points behind Federer, who lost his

second match in a row after falling to Nadal in a Wimbledon final classic three weeks ago.

The Spaniard could cut that margin to a mere 275 should he win the title on Sunday for a second of his career in Canada.

Nadal, who has beaten Federer in four finals this year including Roland Garros and Wimbledon, continues to play the modest card.

As usual, Nadal refuses to consider himself the heir apparent despite his recent success, which has featured victories over Federer in four major finals this season, including Roland Garros and Wimbledon.

"I'm having a good season, but still I'm still number two," said the Spaniard. "I still have the same motivation to continue improving."

"If I play like I have over the past four months, I will have my chances for number one."

Australian Open champion Djokovic is equally motivated.

"I just want to keep my focus about my career. If I continue going forward the same way, the results will come," Djokovic said. "I played the best tennis of my career in the first six months of the year."

Federer insists that his slump will not be permanent. And he's got the two major goals in immediate mind.

"I've got to regroup and look forward. The bigger picture is the Olympic Games and the US Open," Federer said. "Those are really the

places where I want to win, so I have to make sure I'm ready for that."

In third round play, German Nikolas Kiefer eliminated fourth seed Nikolay Davydenko 4-6, 6-4, 6-4 while Croatian spoiler Marin Cilic dealt 2003 Canadian winner and sixth seed Andy Roddick a huge blow as he upset the sixth seed 6-4, 4-6, 6-4.

Number seven James Blake made a second straight recovery after losing a first set to post a win against Russian Dmitry Tursunov 4-6, 6-1, 6-4.

Britain's Andy Murray left Switzerland without a representative, defeating ninth seed Stanislas Wawrinka 6-2, 0-6, 6-4.

Roddick realises his game in crisis after coming back from a spring shoulder injury.

"Something doesn't feel comfortable," said the American, who broke a racket after a dispute with the chair umpire concerning an over-rule, which the official later admitted he got wrong.

"I keep feeling if I get a couple three, four matches into a tournament I'll be all right," said Roddick, playing for the first time since an early Wimbledon exit.

"I'm not able to do that. It was pretty ordinary out there today. Things are going wrong a little bit across the board. The forehead is just not doing anything, I'm missing it. That's the one that I need to click right now."

Champions League postponed

Cricket

AFP, New Delhi

Cricket's multi-million dollar Twenty20 Champions League has been postponed, an Indian official said on Friday, amid reports of wrangling over terms and conditions.

The inaugural football-style League, featuring the top 20 Twenty20 domestic sides from England, Australia, South Africa, India and possibly Pakistan, was to be held across India between September 30 and October 8.

Indian cricket official Lalit Modi, who organised the hugely successful Indian Premier League Twenty20 competition earlier this year, said the Champions League would be held at a later date.

"There is no plan to shelve the tournament but the dates will be finalised after the Champions Trophy in Pakistan in September," Modi was quoted as saying in the local media.

Modi declined to elaborate, but media reports blamed the delay on disagreements between the participating nations over eligibility, timing and financial terms.

The 10-million dollar event was to take place in the short 11-day gap between the Champions Trophy final in Pakistan on September 28 and the first Test between Australia and India in Bangalore from October 9.

Cricket Australia, tasked with finalising the playing conditions of the Champions League, was reportedly unhappy that the dates clashed with Australia's only warm-up match on the Indian tour before the first Test.

India's demand for a 50 percent financial stake in the League was also opposed by other nations,

Pakistan thankful

AFP, Karachi

Pakistan's relieved cricket authorities said Friday that they were more focused than ever on staging a safe Champions Trophy following a decision to keep the prestigious event in their country.

The International Cricket Council (ICC) decided Thursday to keep the Champions Trophy in Pakistan, despite fears of a pullout by players from Australia, New Zealand and England over security concerns.

The ICC appointed a task force to ensure a tight security plan is implemented for the September 11-28 tournament, in which Australia are the defending champions.

"Yes, we are relieved and more focused now that a decision has finally been made, although we always had confidence in the wisdom of the ICC board," Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) chief operating officer Shaqafat Nagmi told AFP.

"It's a matter of great satisfaction that the security concerns were addressed and it is now more a question of addressing the perceptions, and separate perceptions from reality," said Nagmi.

The cricketers' associations of Australia and New Zealand have however expressed disappointment at the ICC decision and advised players not to travel to Pakistan.

Players press

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of the tournament would be able to convince players. "This is not something I treat lightly but we can manage it," Lorgat said. "We will use this task team to ensure that we properly communicated with players who have concerns. We are making sure FICA is a part of the process to understand the situation."

"We have to separate perception from reality. We will do our utmost to assure them that we would not go into an event where safety or security is going to be compromised."

"We need to gain trust as event organizers," Lorgat said, "and will do everything possible to ensure their safety and security."

When athletes come up to me and say, "That's what it feels like."

Al Oerter's abstract works are flurries of color and magenta and greens and violets and golds and blues created with the impact of his discus. They will eventually hang in the Fort Myers gallery with the paintings by American sprinter Florence Griffith Joyner, a three-time gold medalist at the 1988 Games. Swiss fencer Jean Blaise Evequoz has contributed his work and Lizton Bochette III, who competed in four winter Games and two summer Olympics for Puerto Rico, displays drawings that reflect Olympic themes.

"Even if you took the Olympics out of it, this would be a fascinating show," Gabrielle Oerter said. "It's not that we are saying, 'Because you're an Olympic athlete, your artwork doesn't have to be nearly as good.' The artwork is as good, and it deserves to be an exhibit. It's really excellent work, and it just celebrates what you can do."

Steyn out of third Test

CRICINFO, undated

Dale Steyn has fractured his left thumb, but the injury is unlikely to keep him out of South Africa's bowling line-up for the third Test, at Edgbaston, starting on July 30.

X-rays taken on Thursday revealed his injury, but the plan was always to rest him for the tour match against Bangladesh A, which started at New Road on Friday.

Steyn took seven wickets in South Africa's ten-wicket win over England in Headingley after a sluggish start in the opening Test at Lord's. He has risen rapidly up the world rankings over the last 12 months and has become the spearhead of South Africa's attack.

There were also injury concerns over Paul Harris, who hurt his right wrist after slipping in his hotel bathroom. However, he was passed fit for the three-day game against Bangladesh A as he aims to maintain his place in the Test eleven. He claimed three wickets at Lord's, but didn't make an impression at Headingley as the quick bowlers did the damage.

'Dhoni proposal was on time'

PTI, New Delhi

The Cricket Board today dismissed reports that it delayed in recommending Mahendra Singh Dhoni for country's highest sports award and said the application was sent well before the deadline.

"The BCCI had sent the following completed applications for the Government Awards by Speed Post from the Mumbai office on 27th May 2008," BCCI secretary Niranjan Shah said in a statement.

The last date for submission of the forms was May 31.

BCCI has recommended Dhoni for Rajiv Gandhi Khel Ratna award, former captain Chafdu Borde for Dhyan Chand award and VS Patil for Dronacharya award.

Incidentally, BCCI did not recommend any player for the Arjuna award.

'Too many cooks in little kitchen'

CRICINFO, undated

Allen Stanford, the Antigua-based billionaire who is bankrolling the Stanford 20/20 for 20, has said that the structure of West Indies cricket administration needs to be "streamlined" and that there were "too many players handling too few dollars" at present.

"How can you have the West Indies Cricket Board (WICB), the Leewards and Windwards boards, and the individual island boards running a programme that really ought to be run through one board with a representative from each island to streamline efficiency," Stanford told the Nation. "That is what makes business sense."

"We have too many cooks in this little kitchen. We need to streamline this. None of this is disrespecting people. None of this is saying we are doing anything wrong in terms of any island, but we have too many players handling too few dollars."

The WICB comprises 18 directors, including a president and a vice-president. The six territorial associations have two directors each and the numbers are made up by four non-elected directors.

Stanford's view was supported by former West Indian fast bowler, Wes Hall, who is one of the 14 legends on the Stanford 20/20 board of directors. Hall was the WICB president between 2001 and 2003.

"You need a board that is not 18 people," Hall said. "You want a West Indies Cricket Board and not a West Indies business board with a cricket committee that has no clout. You don't need 18 people. You need eight. We've said so for years, but nobody is listening."

The WICB and chief sponsors Digicel are currently heading to arbitration over the issue raised by the Irish telecommunications company that the Stanford five-year, US\$100 million series -- which consists of one All-Star match per year against an England team -- encroaches on their exclusive sponsorship rights.

Village all set

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cuisine will be available 24 hours a day.

Village restaurants will serve traditional Beijing dishes such as Peking Duck, Chinese-style porridge and hand-shaved noodles.

"Athletes can also request their favorite dishes they're craving from home and we will try our best to accommodate them," Deng said.

Located about a 25-minute walk northwest of the two centerpiece venues for the games, the Bird's Nest stadium and swimming's Water Cube high-rise apartments in the 163-acre complex will be sold after the games for \$500,000 to \$1 million each.

In November, China denied allegations of religious intolerance when media reports surfaced that Bibles would be banned during the games. Since then, organizers have announced that 10,000 copies of the Bible will be distributed in places of worship throughout the Athletes Village.

Tough choices ahead

Cricket

AFP, London

England's selectors face some difficult choices ahead of their announcement Saturday of the squad for the third Test against South Africa at Edgbaston.

After his side were thrashed by 10 wickets at Headingley, where the Proteas took a 1-0 lead in the four-match series, England captain Michael Vaughan took the highly unusual step of saying team selection had appeared "confused".

This was widely seen as thinly veiled attack on the way in which Australia-raised but Grimsby-born paceman Darren Pattinson had been handed a shock debut after his Nottinghamshire colleague Ryan Sidebottom had withdrawn because of a back injury.

Hampshire paceman Chris Tremlett had originally been chosen as cover for Sidebottom but England's plans were thrown into further disruption when pace bowler James Anderson, who eventually played, had a late injury scare.

Pattinson had played just 11 first-class matches before his England call and it was hard to see

how he would trouble Test batsmen more than Simon Jones, Stephen Harmison and Matthew Hoggard, all overlooked at Leeds.

"I was a bit disappointed with the last Test, with the selections etc," Jones said. "They obviously chose him (Pattinson) because they thought he was the right man for the job but I'm sure a few bowlers around England were a bit disappointed."

At Headingley the four-man selection panel of ex-England off-spinner Geoff Miller, former England international Ashley Giles and James Whitaker and England coach Peter Moores altered the team after England had played a record six successive Tests with the same side.

They dropped the popular Paul Collingwood, who made way for Andrew Flintoff, on the morning of the match but might have done less damage to team morale if they'd left him out the day before, given they seemed determined to play five frontline bowlers.

Flintoff, in his first Test after 18 months out injured, was typically economical but against disciplined South Africa batsmen, who rarely flirted with danger outside off-stump, he did not bowl straight

enough.

For all his 2005 Ashes heroics, Flintoff has a modest bowling average of over 33 and such was Vaughan's lack of confidence in the rest of his attack that a man who ought to be a shock bowler became a stock bowler in Leeds, sending down 40 overs as the Proteas piled up 522.

Stuart Broad, as he'd done at Lord's, made an attractive fifty down the order. But while the pace bowler is averaging 80 with the bat, he is also averaging 96 with the ball.

Sidebottom's expected return should bolster England's bowling at Edgbaston but that still leaves the Broad question open.

England made nearly 600 in the drawn first Test at Lord's but the fact their inconsistent top five managed just one fifty between them at Headingley is arguably the biggest concern to emerge from their defeat.

Vaughan, England's No 3, has scored just one hundred in his last 21 Test innings. But England's captain has had the happy knack of making runs when his position has been called into question.

England will hope he is back to his best at Edgbaston where defeat would see them lose the series.

Asif trying to hire medicine expert

Cricket

CRICINFO, undated

Pakistan fast bowler Mohammad Asif is trying to hire the services of Dr Graham Durgan, a sports medicine expert from England, to plead his case against the dope charges after he tested positive for a banned substance during the Indian Premier League.

"Nothing is final as yet," Shahid Karim, Asif's lawyer, told Dawn. "But we are holding talks to secure the services of Dr Durgan." Asif had also tried to hire Mark Gay, who is an anti-doping expert, but didn't receive a response from the British lawyer.

Asif had asked for the B sample test, which was scheduled for July 28 at a World Anti-Doping Agency accredited laboratory in Switzerland, to be postponed in order to give him time to prepare

his case and make travel arrangements. Karim said that they had sent two requests for postponement to the IPL, who hadn't accepted or rejected the request.

The IPL doping case is not the only cloud currently hovering over Asif. His 19-day detention in Dubai for allegedly carrying a banned substance is also the subject of a separate inquiry within the Pakistan board. Reports from Dubai authorities on the matter have finally been received by the PCB and Asif has been asked to attend a hearing in Lahore on Thursday.

"We have received reports from Dubai regarding Asif's detention there and will now be hearing the player's side of the story," PCB chief operating officer Shafiqat Nagmi, one of the committee members, told The News. He said that the committee could take a decision on Asif after the hearing.

Asif was in detention in Dubai from June 1 to 20 for suspected possession of an illegal substance. The case against him was dropped by the Dubai public prosecutor on the grounds of insignificance, though it was speculated that behind-the-scenes help had been provided by the Pakistan government and the board, who share close ties with the monarchy in the UAE.



Beleaguered Pakistani paceman Mohammad Asif arrives for a hearing in Lahore yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

MA Hamid

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won the National Sports Award.

His namajeh janajas will be held today at the Outer Stadium handball ground at 11am and after the Jehr prayers at the Banani DOHS Jame Mosque.

Bangladesh Army Chief General Moeen U Ahmed, Bangladesh Olympic Association, Bangladesh Football Federation, Bangladesh Cricket Board, BSA, BSWA and BSWC condoled the death of Hamid and prayed for the salvation of the departed soul and expressed their deep sympathy for the bereaved family.

The new apartheid

Cricket

HARSHA BHOGLE

While India play Sri Lanka and the rain in Colombo, on what seems like another batsman obsessed pitch, the juniors are out in Australia putting in some impressive performances against their peers. Cricket never stops, does it? It only moves elsewhere!

Rarely has a nation put out such vastly different teams within days of each other as India have in Sri Lanka post the Asia Cup. Eight out of the eleven in the first Test were not present in Pakistan and that tells me two things: one, that India must possess great depth in their cricket and two, that there ought to have been some rusty players in Colombo.

But these are different days in Indian cricket and there is now a fully functional cricket academy which means that there is a facility for players who haven't played cricket to get back into rhythm under a very good coach and fitness trainers. The NCA is, at the moment, one of the most valuable resources the BCCI could have built up. Just imagine having set in, there would hardly have been any practice or training facilities around, a call would have to be sent out for volunteers. Instead, the players will be as ready for competition as they could have been.

Harbhajan gets his spot back straightaway and that is good and bad. It is a vote of confidence in his

ability, which has never been doubted anyway, but it would have been nice if there had been competition forcing him to fight his way back. But there is none in Indian cricket when it comes to Test matches and that is why it might have been a better idea to let the emerging nations to play three or four day games as well, for that would have told us of the quality of Piyush Chawla, Amit Mishra and Pragyan Ojha in the longer format.

Instead, Piyush Chawla will probably have to sit at home because in an unfortunate announcement, the BCCI has announced that Indian players cannot play for county sides in England that have ICL players on their staff. I wonder if I am the only person who is wondering if there is a new apartheid in world cricket. I can go so far as to understand one body not picking players who have played for another set-up. But not to take the field in the company of those that have played the ICL, in a third country, seems cruel and unfair.

Even at the height of South Africa's isolation, Bishan Bedi bowled to Barry Richards in county cricket, Sunil Gavaskar batted with Graeme Pollock in a world eleven and nobody raised a hue and cry over it.

I think we need to be a little more generous. A little more understanding. It will help Indian cricket if VVS Laxman gets some more good cricket under his belt before Australia come to India; for Piyush Chawla to bowl a lot more overs and experiment and bowl more leg breaks. For just as Zaheer Khan benefitted from a lot of bowl-

ing, so too could young Chawla who needs to grow quickly since Anil Kumble doesn't have a lot of time left. I think we have missed an opportunity.

Zaheer, indeed, is the player to watch out for in Sri Lanka. He has spent far too much time off the field in his career but he gives the impression of having come to terms with it and by not rushing back, he is giving himself the best possible chance of success in the time that he has. In England last year, he played a huge role in India's first series win there for years (under Rahul Dravid, it is often forgotten) and I believe by using him wisely, we will get a lot more out of him. Luckily there are people to fill his slot. Ishant Sharma and Sreesanth in form, for example, would make a terrific combination.

I would also like to see a few serious challengers emerge for the middle order slots in the next year. Yuvraj Singh must feel disappointed at not being in Sri Lanka but the way out is to be hard on himself and return to where he belongs: the first cut off the rank. While Rohit Sharma is an obvious candidate, I would like to see a closer look at Sadrinath who has done almost everything asked of him. This may be a fantasy thought but won't it be great if India's current Test side could take on this in a five day game: Robin Uthappa, Shikhar Dhawan, Rohit Sharma, Yuvraj Singh, Badrinath, Suresh Raina, Parthiv Patel, Piyush Chawla, Pragyan Ojha, Sreesanth and RP Singh.