

Ashrafal to bank on bonding

SPORTS REPORTER

Captain Mohammad Ashrafal hopes to bank on an extended fitness camp when his side take on the mighty Australians at the end of this month.

Bangladesh rounded off a four-week camp in which much of the focus went to conditioning as well as fielding.

"This is the most gym we have done in the last two years," said Ashrafal at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium yesterday ahead of their August 14 departure.

"We have put a lot of emphasis into our fitness and I think our time together (in the camp) would be fruitful," added the ace batsman.

However, much of the national players were playing in England with the Bangladesh A team during the camp. But Ashrafal said that the experience would come in handy for his boys.

"We have spent four weeks together and it is a good, long camp and something that we haven't been on for a long time," said Ashrafal before adding that he hoped to keep the tempo going in the three-match ODI series against the world champions.

Meanwhile, Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) revealed the itinerary of the upcoming tour of Australia.

Ahead of the three ODIs, the national cricketers will play five limited-overs practice matches.

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Did U Know?

A modern archer is called a toxophilite, which comes from the Greek word "toxos", meaning bow.



Kapil Dev

(Indian cricket legend)
"If we can have BMW and Mercedes as separate companies why can't we have both IPL and ICL?"
Pondering why the feud of the 'leagues' should continue in India.



TEN Sports

Sri Lanka v India
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STAR Cricket

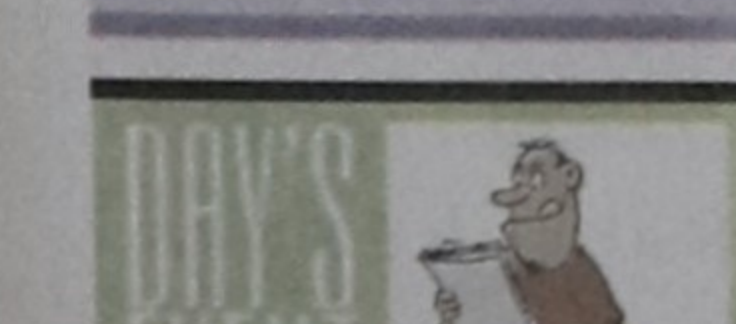
England v South Africa
Fourth Test, Day Two
Live from 4:00pm

BTB

Beijing Olympics 2008
Opening Ceremony
Live from 8:15pm

ESPN

Sportscentre India
Sports News
Live at 10:30pm



Citycell Federation Cup
Mukjibdaha v Wanderers (5pm)
Farashganj v Khulna Abahani (7pm)



HE PLAYS AND SCORES: Argentina star Lionel Messi (L), subject of a heated club-country row, runs off after scoring against Ivory Coast during their opening match of the Olympics at the Shanghai Stadium yesterday.

Messi lights up Day 1

AGENCIES, Beijing

Argentina's Lionel Messi, cleared to play in the Olympics after striking a late deal with his club Barcelona, celebrated by scoring the opener and creating the winner as the South Americans beat Ivory Coast 2-1 on Thursday.

In Shenyang, Brazil had midfielder Hernanes to thank, after engineering a laborious 1-0 over nine-man Belgium.

Messi's participation in the Games had been in serious doubt after Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS) ruled on Wednesday that Barcelona was not obliged to release him for the tournament.

But after a deal was struck over

insurance cover for potential injury and a commitment that the forward would not play in international friendlies for one year, Messi took the field in Shanghai.

After a lively start from Ivory Coast, who played with plenty of pace and ambition, Argentina went close through forward Sergio Agüero who had a shot saved in the seventh minute and then blasted wide from a promising position 20 minutes later.

Ivory Coast forward Saloman Kalou had an effort disallowed for offside but Argentina were growing in confidence and fluency and after Riquelme had gone close with a free-kick, Messi found the breakthrough.

Riquelme threaded a superb pass into the path of Messi who showed great composure as he effortlessly slotted home.

The Africans fought back

though after the break when Sekou Cisse rose superbly at the back post and his firm header flashed past Oscar Ustari to make it 1-1.

Messi, lively throughout, set up Agüero for a shot on goal that was ruled out for offside in the 65th and then with four minutes of normal time remaining he produced the inspiration for the winner.

Jinking in from the left, Messi fired in a low, diagonal drive which was parried out into the path of substitute Lautaro Acosta, who slotted into the unguarded goal to ensure Argentina move top of Group A.

For Brazil, the 23-year-old Hernanes twisted past a defender with 12 minutes left and unleashed a left foot drive that flew past Belgium keeper Logan Bailly to hand one of the tournament favourites a crucial win.

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Crucial Test from today

Cricket

AFP, Colombo

Sri Lanka captain Mahela Jayawardene says his team need to put pressure on a resurgent India in the crucial third and final Test starting here on Friday in a bid to maintain their impressive home record.

Sri Lanka have lost just one of

their last seven home Test series since August 2004, the lone defeat coming against Pakistan two years ago.

The current series is tied at 1-1, with Sri Lanka winning the opening Test by an innings and 239 runs in Colombo and India coming back strongly to clinch a 170-run victory in the second match in Galle.

The Sri Lankan captain said his bowlers would look for early breakthroughs to keep pressure on the

India's middle-order batsmen, who have yet to fire in the series.

Virender Sehwag and Gautam Gambhir played key roles in India's win, adding 167 for the opening wicket in the first innings and 90 in the second. Sehwag was named man-of-the-match for scoring an unbeaten 201 and 50.

"Sehwag batted really well and took his chances in Galle. India are getting some good starts and that is something we will think about," said Jayawardene.

"If we get early breakthroughs we can manage to keep the rest of their batsmen pretty quiet. If we keep that pressure on the top of the order we have a very good chance."

The Sri Lankan captain praised

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India superstar Sachin Tendulkar puts on his pads before batting during a practice session at the P Sara Stadium in Colombo yesterday ahead of the third Test that starts today. Tendulkar is 97 runs shy of surpassing West Indies great Brian Lara as Test cricketers leading scorer.

Mohammedan leave it late

Citycell FEDERATION CUP '08

SPORTS REPORTER

Mohammedan Sporting Club left it very late in a less-than-convincing 1-0 victory over Sunrise Sporting Club in a Citycell Federation Cup match at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

In ninety uninspiring minutes, the Dhaka giants created chances that came few and far between against a Senior Division side who looked surprisingly better at times. Mohammedan were always the better side, be it on paper or out in the centre, but this was a match when the end result spoke correctly of the state of the match.

Robin, one of two strikers employed by Mohammedan, slammed in the all-important goal in the 87th minute when he drove home a low shot past the Sunrise goalkeeper Sunny. But the goal was created due to midfielder Sharif's quick thinking as he fed Robin from the right, despite being marked by two Sunrise defenders.

Sharif, Maruf and Faisal -- Mohammedan's midfield trio --

kept things under control at most times but whenever they would swing in a cross or feed Robin or his striking partner Rony, the ball simply trickled into Sunny's hand.

In the ninth minute, Sharif played a ball through to Rony but the striker's shot from the left side blazed over the bar. A minute later, it was Faisal who went ahead but his shot, from virtually the same spot, found the 'keeper.

Mohammedan did all the running in the first-half and whatever Sunrise tried was easily dealt by skipper Jewel Rana and the towering Shaikat.

The best chance of the first 45 minutes came through the Sunrise custodian's post clearance.

In the 24th minute, Sunny's miskick found Sharif, not too far away, and the midfielder tapped the ball on to Rony's feet but the striker, who only had the goal-keeper to beat, messed it up and as it usually happens, the ball simply blazed over the crossbar.

Jewel Rana's header was saved off the line by Azad after Maruf's corner found the Mohammedan captain five minutes later.

In the last ten minutes of the first-half, Mohammedan created several chances but there seemed to be no one in the end of any ball.

For a team that hails from a lower division, Sunrise made their presence felt.

Their midfield were found wanting but they should be proud of their defence, who at times looked a ease, especially in the second-half.

Raju made sure Sunrise had at least one shot at goal although it sailed past Aminul's goal in the 55th minute.

Six minutes before the goal, Maruf swung in a corner and found Rajani who slammed in a shot only to be thwarted by a defender. That clearance went as far as Shaikat who drove towards goal but it was Sunny's best save as he moved smartly to his left to stop the ball.

In the day's other match, Arambagh got the better of Rahmatganj by 2-1. Jerry scored both goals for Arambagh while Francis reduced the gap.

TEAMS
MOHAMMEDAN: Aminul, Rajani, Jewel Rana, Shaikat, Arman, Nasir, Faisal, Maruf (Kamal), Sharif, Rony (Komol), Robin.
SUNRISE: Sunny, Mamun, Mizan (Shaon), Azad, Shanto, Liton, Mahfuz, Jewel, Babu, Atique, Sujon.
Yellow cards: Arman (Mohammedan).
Referee: Azad Rahman.



Mohammedan striker Rony (C) tries to get the better of Liton (L), Sunrise's busy defender, during their Citycell Federation Cup final round match at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

Dinesh lifts chess title

SPORTS REPORTER

Indian International Master Dinesh Kumar Sharma became unbeaten champions in the eighth United Insurance and United Chess International Masters Chess tournament at the federation hall-room yesterday.

He finished with 7.5 points after a draw with FIDE Master Abu Sufian Shakil in the final round.

He received Tk 56,000 as did Pakistan's International Master Mahmood Lodhi who finished as runners-up.

WORLD JUNIOR CHESS

FIDE Master Shamima Akhter Liza lost to Grandmaster Foisor Sabina Francesca in the girl's section of the 5th round match of the World Junior (under-20) Chess Championship held at Gaziantep in Turkey on Wednesday.

After the 5th round, Liza remained on two points.

LOCAL SNIPPETS

SPORTS REPORTER

Swadheenata take on Rampura in the first semifinal of the Dhaka City Corporation Pioneer Football League today at the Bir Shrestha Sepoy Mohammad Mostafa Stadium in Kamalapur.

In the other semifinal, Tangail Football Club will meet BKSP on Saturday at the same venue.

Two finalists of the league will earn the right to play in the Metropolitan Third Division Football League from next season.

FED CUP TABLE TENNIS

The Federation Cup Invitational Table Tennis tournament will begin on August 28 at the NSC Wooden Floor Gymnasium.

Seven events -- men's team,

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England on front foot

Cricket

AGENCIES, London

Recalled England fast bowler Steve Harmison took two wickets in two balls and James Anderson captured three to reduce South Africa to 158 for seven at tea on the first day of the fourth Test at The Oval on Thursday.

Spinner Monty Panesar, brought on for the over before tea, added the scalp of AB de Villiers, who had been steadying the South African innings with his 39 runs.

Harmison dismissed captain Graeme Smith (46) and Hashim Amla (36) in the 32nd over of the day before Anderson, swinging the

ball late, dismissed Jacques Kallis lbw for two.

The wickets were a welcome boost to new captain Kevin Pietersen, who took over from Michael Vaughan on Monday, hoping to salvage some pride against the country of his birth after South Africa had taken a winning 2-0 lead in the series.

Harmison, returning to the side after performing well for Durham, had watched Alastair Cook drop Smith off the first ball of the match in a frustrating opening session for England.

He and Andrew Flintoff beat the bat of both openers frequently on an overcast day before Flintoff had opener Neil McKenzie caught by Cook in the slips for 17 in a morning

session shortened by a shower. Pietersen replaced Flintoff and the expensive Stuart Broad early in the afternoon after Cook dropped two more chances.

Smith attempted to pull Harmison but top-edged high to the long-leg boundary where Anderson took the catch.

With the next ball Harmison clean bowled Amla with a stunning yorker and Anderson's inswinging to Kallis next over reduced the visitors to 105 for four.

Anderson had Prince, playing a loose shot, caught at cover by Ian Bell for four.

He then dismissed Mark Boucher for three with an outswinger that the South African

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