

Tyson Kobe-struck

"We were in the gym and I asked him (Bryant) if I could have my photograph taken with him. He replied by asking about my hamstring injury and his heart. I didn't know what to expect from approaching him. I was so excited that I rang my mother and asked me about my leg! I he's a superstar over here." US sprinter Tyson Gay reveals his modest side on a meeting with superstar Kobe Bryant.



Did U Know?

Running barefoot, Abebe Bikila of Ethiopia won the marathon at the 1960 Rome Olympics. Despite undergoing an appendectomy just over a month before the race, Bikila returned to win the marathon at the Tokyo Games in 1964 in a world record time, this time with shoes and socks.



Guo Jingjing

(Chinese swimmer)
"I am satisfied with my performance and we are both very happy because we are on home soil in China -- we are very proud to have won."

After winning the synchronised three-metre springboard diving gold in the Beijing Olympics Games with her partner Wu Minxia on Sunday.

Thrilling win for Academy boys

SPORTS REPORTER

Pacer Mahbubul Alam scripted an exciting three-run win for GP-BCB National Cricket Academy in the first four-day match against their South African counterparts at Tukkies in Pretoria yesterday.

It looked like a formality for the South African Academy side to complete a victory on the fourth and final day as the home side came to bat requiring only 81 runs to win to take a lead in the two-match series.

But Mahbubul and co dashed their hopes to wrap up their second innings for just 77 runs in 23.1 overs.

The tall right-arm seamer, who also captured four wickets in the first innings for 86 runs, was the chief wrecker with 4 for 38 while left-arm pacer Shafaq Al Jabir claimed two wickets and Ziaur Rahman took two for 19.

Left-arm spinner Suhrawardi Shuvo picked up a wicket and one batsman fell victim of a run out.

Earlier GP-BCB Academy scored 217 and 237 runs while South Africa Academy side amassed 374 in their first innings.

The second and final four-day match will also be held in Pretoria from August 14 while the one-day matches are scheduled for August 20 (Johannesburg), August 22 (Pretoria) and August 24 (Johannesburg).

BFF's vast plan for women's football

SPORTS REPORTER

The Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) will introduce the girls' school football competition this October in Dhaka, it was decided after the first meeting of the BFF women's football committee at the BFF Bhaban yesterday.

BFF president Kazi Salahuddin attended the meeting, chaired by committee chairman Sirajul Islam Bachchu.

"Women's football is not played by many countries in South Asia. I want to concentrate on this sector beside development of others sectors," Salahuddin told after the meeting.

"We will form a women's wing in the Hill Tracts with professional executives to groom women footballers as girls from this area have more potential," he added.

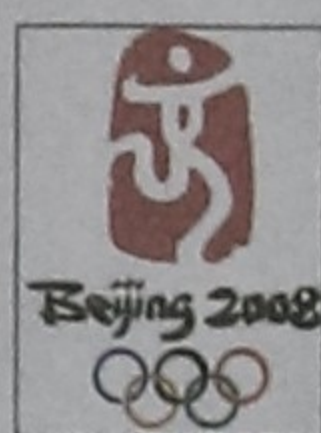
The BFF chief also promised to donate 500 footballs to the women's committee to be distributed in 64 districts.

The committee also plans to hold the National Championship in October-November and the national women's team are expected to tour the South Asian countries in December and January (2009).

Also on the card are a club tournament, the Inter-divisional tournament, a coaches training programme and refreshers' course for women referees.

Golden boy Bindra

AFP, Beijing



all his life.

Bindra, a 25-year-old businessman from Chandigarh, followed his world championship title of two years ago by grabbing the men's 10m Air Rifle shooting gold medal.

Athens Games champion Zhu Qinan of China won the silver and Henri Hakkinen of Finland the bronze after one of the most thrilling shooting finals in Olympic history.

Bindra, who trailed by two points after the qualification round, trumped his rivals in the 10-shot final as he went into the last shot level with Hakkinen on 689.7 points.

While Bindra secured his best score of 10.8 in the deciding shot, Hakkinen managed only 9.7 to concede the silver to Zhu, whose

last shot was 10.5.

"It's the best feeling of my life," said an elated Bindra, a winner of India's highest sporting award, the Rajiv Gandhi Khel Ratna (sports jewel), in 2001.

"I was just trying to concentrate on shooting, I was not thinking about making history."

"For me life will go on. All my life I have just been punching holes in a blank piece of paper target."

"But I sincerely hope this win will change the face of Olympic sport in India. In our country, Olympic sports are not really a priority, I hope now they will get more attention."

India, a nation of a billion people addicted to cricket, have won eight field hockey Olympic gold medals but had never won an individual title before Bindra's feat.

The previous best was trap shooter Rajyavardhan Rathore's silver at Athens four years ago, while there were bronze medals for wrestler Khasaba Jadhav (1952), tennis star Leander Paes (1996) and woman weightlifter Karnam Malleswari (2000).

Meanwhile, Satu Mäkelä-Nummela of Finland, a 36-year-old mother of two, won the women's Trap gold medal in her maiden Olympic appearance.

Zuzana Stefecekova of Slovakia took the silver, while Corey Cogdell of the United States claimed the bronze after winning a shoot-off with three other competitors.

"It is amazing," said Mäkelä-Nummela. "I did not believe I would win today."

"I could not concentrate in the final because I was thinking of home. But it's good I did not think of the results or who was breathing down my neck."

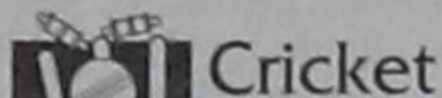
"That made sure I was not under any pressure."

Cogdell, the youngest of the three medalists at 21, won the shoot-off against a field that included 2000 Sydney Games champion Daina Gudzeviciute of Lithuania.

Of the six shooting golds decided over the first three days of competition, China and the Czech Republic have won two each with India and Finland taking the other two.

Lanka win in style

Mendis breaks WR



Cricket

AFP, Colombo

Sri Lanka survived early blows to clinch the series against an injury-ridden India with a comfortable eight-wicket victory on the penultimate day of the third and final Test here on Monday.

The hosts lost Michael Vandort and Kumar Sangakkara in the opening seven overs before reaching a 122-run target in the closing session, thanks to Malinda Warnapura (54 not out) and skipper Mahela Jayawardene (50 not out).

Sri Lanka had won the opening Test by an innings and 239 runs and India the second match by 170 runs.

India, trailing by 147 runs, were bowled out for 268 in their second innings despite gutsy half-centuries from a struggling Rahul Dravid (68) and an injured Venkatesh Laxman (61 not out).

The tourists were without pacer Ishant Sharma, who batted with a runner but was unfit to bowl after falling on his follow-through on Saturday.

Off-spinner Harbhajan Singh shared the new ball with Zaheer Khan and struck with his fourth delivery when he bowled out-of-form opener Vandort (eight), who finished the series with just 39 runs.

Zaheer claimed a big wicket in his fourth over when he removed Sangakkara, who drove straight to Gautam Gambhir at mid-off. Sangakkara, who made a solid 144 in the first innings, contributed only four.

There were no more hiccups for Sri Lanka as Jayawardene and left-handed Warnapura made the most of India's depleted attack, adding 101 for the unfinished third-wicket stand.

Warnapura hit five fours in his fourth half-century in seven Tests, while Jayawardene finished the match when he cut Sourav Ganguly for his third four.

Sri Lankan spinners Muttiah Muralitharan and Ajantha Mendis earlier dashed India's hopes of setting a challenging target as they shared three of the five wickets

after the tourists had resumed at 161-5.

Unorthodox spinner Mendis, all of 23 years, had Dravid caught at first slip by Jayawardene for his third victim of the innings to finish the series with 26 wickets, the highest by any bowler in a debut three-Test series.

The previous record-holder was Englishman Alec Bedser, who took 24 wickets against India at home in 1946.

Dravid and Laxman batted defiantly to add 85 for the sixth

wicket before Mendis ended India's fightback. Dravid hit six fours in his 166-ball knock, his first half-century of the series.

Laxman, batting with a runner after twisting his left ankle on Saturday, hit three fours in his second half-century of the series to emerge India's most successful middle-order batsman with 215 runs in six innings.

It was an easily forgettable series for Sachin Tendulkar, Sourav Ganguly and Rahul Dravid.

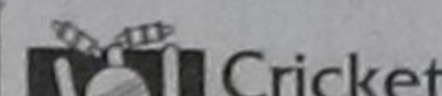
SEE PAGE 18 COL 2



PHOTO: AFP

ONE HELL OF A DEBUT: Sri Lanka's mystery spinner Ajantha Mendis celebrates the wicket of India batsman Rahul Dravid during the fourth day of the third and final Test at the P Sara Stadium in Colombo on Monday.

Fielding lets India down



Cricket

CRICINFO, undated

Late last year, after a five-match ODI series against Pakistan, India's fielding coach Robin Singh sent a report to the BCCI assessing the players' fielding skills. The report praised a couple of players' throwing arms, spoke of poor agility among others and lamented the concentration and commitment of a few, but there was one common theme to his observations: the need to improve anticipation and technique.

After another poor day in the field for India, you have to wonder what has happened since November 2007. At the SSC, where India lost by an innings and 239 runs, Mahela Jayawardene was dropped by wicketkeeper Dinesh Karthik on 55 and 93 and Thilan Samaraweera was dropped by Gautam Gambhir at short leg on 53. Matters weren't much better in

Galle, where Karthik and Gambhir were the culprits again.

On Sunday India refused to learn from their mistakes. Close-in fielders repeatedly reacted too late or too early, flat-footed rookies and veterans tripped over balls and failed to reach down in time, Harbhajan Singh kicked a ball away in frustration only to allow a single, and Parthiv Patel missed a stumping.

Sri Lanka, meanwhile, struck the first blow with a sharp catch off Virender Sehwag by Samaraweera at gully; they hammered in the final nail when Sachin Tendulkar, perhaps wary of three lurking close catchers, padded up to Ajantha Mendis late in the day. It was in stark contrast with India's attempt to apply pressure.

Anil Kumble began the day with three short legs, one behind the wicket and two in front. In the third over of the day Gambhir stood up too early instead of crouching in anticipation and saw the ball fly past. Then Karthik reacted too soon

and couldn't dive to reach a catch in time. India cannot expect to win consistently unless half chances are regularly converted.

Throughout the first session, Prasanna Jayawardene and Kumar Sangakkara worked singles past the three short legs, especially between the first of the forward short legs and the backward short leg. And when Kumble called his fielders in to try and prevent the single off the last ball of the 98th over, they were slow to react. Four balls later Pragnan Ojha, one of three substitutes, made a mess of a stop at backward point and allowed three, much to Kumble's fury.

India also missed two run-out chances: Sangakkara turned down a single to sell Prasanna down the river, but Rohit Sharma returned a wayward throw to Parthiv. Run-outs don't come easier than that. In the 129th over Mendis pushed the ball towards Sourav Ganguly at mid-on, Parthiv screamed for the return to the non-striker's end, but

SEE PAGE 18 COL 5



PHOTO: AFP

FIRST INDIAN: Abhinav Bindra of India (R) gets a thumbs-up from his coach Gaby after winning the men's 10m air rifle event at the Beijing Shooting Hall yesterday. Bindra is the first Indian to win an individual gold in Olympics.

Our shooters took steps backward

SPORTS REPORTER

While Abhinav Bindra pulled off one of the biggest surprises of the Beijing Olympics 2008 yesterday by snatching the first ever individual Olympic gold medal for India, his regional rival from Bangladesh finished 46th in the same event.

The 25-year-old Bindra won the Men's 10m Air Rifle at the Beijing Shooting Range Hall with a last shot of 10.8 even after entering the finals behind eventual silver and bronze medalists Zhu Qinan of China (597) and Henri Hakkinen of Finland (598). The Indian sealed the victory with a total of 700.5 points to upset Qinan, the favourite from the host country.

The other Indian competitor Gagan Narang, who is the defending champion of the South Asian Games, finished ninth.

Imam Hossain, Bangladesh's only shooter at the Games, shot 581 points (95, 98, 96, 97, 95, 100) in the qualification round, staying ahead of five shooters from Australia (two), Pakistan, Nicaragua and Macedonia. A total of 51 shooters competed in the event.

Bangladesh and Indian shooters have had mixed results in this event in the past and often fought neck and neck to share glory in different competitions.

It was the same Bindra, who as a 19-year-old, had to settle for silver at the 2002 Manchester Commonwealth Games when he was beaten by Bangladeshi shooter Asif Hossain Khan.

Since then, India have chosen to go ahead while Bangladesh not only sat back but also showed the audacity to humiliate Commonwealth Games and SAF Games gold medalist (2004) Asif, who was brutally assaulted by police in 2006 and never managed to recover his form.

Asif, who got a team silver medal in the 2006 Commonwealth Games and a bronze in the 2005 Asian Championships, failed to score the minimum qualification marks for Beijing.

FED CUP FINAL IN OCT!

No football this week

SPORTS REPORTER

Inclement weather forced the organisers to postpone the ongoing Citycell Federation Cup matches for a week.

Following incessant rain for the past couple of days, the Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) decided to save the Bangabandhu National Stadium pitch from further casualty.

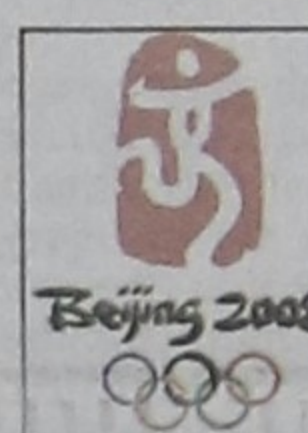
The decision came shortly before yesterday's scheduled Arambagh-Sunrise and Mohammedan-Rahmatganj matches.

The Federation Cup will resume on September 18 with a revised fixture. BFF president Kazi Salahuddin informed last night that the federation is planning to hold some of the matches at Gazipur Stadium when the competition restarts.

Likely, there would be one match per day at each of the venues and the semifinals and final will be held in October, after the Eidul Fitr. Salahuddin added that the BFF is also contemplating launching the second B. League before the Federation Cup semifinals and the final.

India in raptures

AFP, New Delhi



India's first ever individual Olympic gold medal win was greeted back home with disbelief and joy -- as well as renewed hope the country could break with its total obsession with cricket.

Abhinav Bindra, a 25-year-old businessman, was lavished with praise after taking gold in the men's 10m Air Rifle shooting on Monday in one of the most thrilling shooting finals in Olympic history.

"Abhinav has shown the world that an Indian can also stand on the podium," said Indian track and field legend PT. Usha, whose best was an Asian Games gold.

"It is a total result of his hard work and his family support," she said.

Bindra's agent, Latika Khaneja,

a greater achievement. I was the captain of a team that won a gold but this is far bigger," said Vasudevan Bhaskaran, captain of the Indian hockey team which won gold at the Moscow Games in 1980.

"I hope this will be an eye opener for all those who have followed only one sport -- cricket," he said.

Tributes were sent by President Pratibha Patil, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and ruling Congress party chief Sonia Gandhi, while Bindra's family home in Chandigarh in northern India was thronged with well-wishers.

"Abhinav has shown the world that an Indian can also stand on the podium," said Indian track and field legend PT. Usha, whose best was an Asian Games gold.

"It is a total result of his hard work and his family support," she said.

Bindra's agent, Latika Khaneja,

said she hoped corporate India would now inject more sponsorship cash into sports other than cricket.

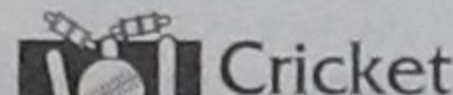
"Abhinav has the youth factor, he's presentable, good-looking. And well, a gold is a gold. There aren't many who can beat that combination," she said.

"While corporations in India are not yet making a beeline for non-cricketers, the gold medal will do the trick."

India is currently facing its four-yearly dilemma of watching cricket or switching to the Olympics -- although this time the Beijing extravaganza appears to be gaining ground.

A poll conducted by one of the Games sponsors found that almost 70 per cent of city-bred Indians will closely follow the action in Beijing despite a clash with India's cricket tour of Sri Lanka.

Some solace for England



Cricket

CRICINFO, London

As fresh starts go this wasn't too shabby from England as they wrapped up a consolation six-wicket victory on the final day at The Oval. Andrew Strauss and Alastair Cook broke the back of the run chase with a positive opening stand of 123 before Makhaya Ntini and Paul Harris claimed two wickets apiece to take away a little of the gloss. But a week after England were plunged into uncertainty Andrew Flintoff signed off the victory with a six to give Kevin Pietersen a winning start.

Given the week he has had the staged appeared set for Pietersen to hit the winning runs until he edged

a catch to short leg with 15 required. As captain of England, Pietersen will have to get used to his side giving him some stressful times, but the opening stand meant that, this time at least, the late wobble didn't do anymore than make victory appear less empathic. Tough challenges lie ahead for Pietersen, not least the forthcoming one-day series and tour of India, but he couldn't have done much more at the start of his reign.

Claiming victories after a series has gone was a speciality of England during the 1990s. While this success won't soften the blow of losing the series it has boosted spirits after a trying couple of weeks when two captains resigned and the questions were being asked about the set-up. With a new leader to impress

England were motivated - while South Africa couldn't quite summon one last push - and they produced some periods of vibrant cricket.

Whatever South Africa say, they weren't really been up for this contest. They expended such huge amounts of physical and emotional energy at Edgbaston that they couldn't rouse themselves. Makhaya Ntini and, especially, Morne Morkel wasted the new ball and the openers had very little to play at. Strauss after a successful run against New Zealand was back under pressure and was given a life on 4, when he clipped Morkel firmly to Ashwell Prince at leg gully, only to see the umpire calling no-ball. It summed up Morkel's session.

The increase in momentum came from Cook who latched onto a couple of short balls from Ntini and also drove nicely down the ground, a sign that hours with Andy Flower in the nets are paying off. Cook made the most of attacking fields set by Graeme Smith with controlled edges down to third man, and both he and Strauss countered Paul Harris with intent. Despite some spin out of the footmarks they used their feet to disrupt his line and length, taking him through the leg side with confident whips.

Cook reached his fourth half-century of the series with a crunching back-foot drive off Jacques Kallis. After the sleepy opening 45 minutes 98 runs were added in the next 18 overs of the morning and they continued a similar vein after the break before South Africa made a breakthrough, Cook driving at wide ball from Ntini and edging to first slip. It was another opportunity to go begging for Cook and although he ends with a series average of 47 there is a sense of fulfilment. However, without ever looking in top form he has continued to score runs, which is a testament to his strength of character.

Strauss slowly found more fluency, bring out a perfect on-drive, and went to his first half-century of the series from 95 balls. Ian Bell never settled during his short stay and he paid the price for

SEE PAGE 18 COL 5



PHOTO: INTERNET

England opener Alastair Cook works the ball to leg during his confident 67 against South Africa on the final day of the fourth and final Test at The Brit Oval in London on Monday.