

2ND B. LEAGUE Abahani play Rahmatganj in opener

SPORTS REPORTER

Defending champions Abahani will host Rahmatganj in the opening match of the Citycell B. League -- the second edition of the professional football league -- on September 13.

Abahani get the home match to start with in the Dhaka derby, which kicks off at the Bangabandhu National Stadium at 3.30 pm.

Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) will unveil logo of the second B. League today at a local hotel and will also reveal the fixture of the 11-team competition.

With the Eid vacation coming within three weeks of the start, the league is expected to be halted for a brief period after September 27 before picking up full momentum from October 5-6.

The 30 footballers who have been picked up for the preliminary national squad for next month's Merdeka Cup in Malaysia, however, will have to do without holidays.

The BFF is looking forward to

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Did U Know?

Andres Gimeno of Spain was the oldest French Open men's singles champion. He won this title beating Patrick Proisy of France at 34 years 301 days in 1972.



Jelena Jankovic

(Serbian tennis star)
"I worked really hard to get to this stage. It will give me a lot of motivation to work hard on my game and improve myself. I believe I'll be playing many more finals in the future. I'm only 23. My time will come." After losing to Serena Williams in the US Open singles final on Sunday.



STAR Sports

FIFA WC Qualifiers
North Korea v South Korea
Live from 1:00pm
Uzbekistan v Australia
Live from 9:25pm
UAE v Saudi Arabia
Live from 12:25am (Thursday)

ESPN

Sportscentre India
Sports News
Live from 8:30pm

Lifson leaving

SPORTS REPORTER

National team physio Darryn Lifson will not continue his job with the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) after the home series against New Zealand in October.

The South African expressed his desire to be relieved in a letter to the BCB citing personal problems.

"He has some personal problems and that's why it's not possible for him to stay away from home. As per his contract, he has served a three-month notice," informed BCB's media committee chairman Ahmed Sajjadul Alam yesterday.

28-year-old Lifson, the former physiotherapist of the Pakistan

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Super Cup next year

Champions to get Tk 1 crore

Football

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) is contemplating to introduce a Tk 2-crore tournament to the domestic calendar next year with the top eight clubs of the B. League, which starts this weekend.

BFF president Kazi Salahuddin revealed the plan yesterday, informing that the winners will pocket one crore taka.

"The other teams will get considerable amount as prize money, but nothing has been finalised yet," said Salahuddin.

"We are planning to hold this tournament after the B. League with the top eight clubs. This will make the teams more competitive

and hope that our football will gradually get rid off the curse of match fixing," Salahuddin hoped.

"The attractive prize money will lure the clubs so they will try to finish among the top eight and not give up points after avoiding relegation."

"We are planning this tournament so the whole nation becomes a professional football nation," said the former national football captain adding that the BFF will start looking for a sponsor for the mega event.

The BFF currently has Citycell as its partner in progress and gets Tk 16-crore for a three-year sponsorship deal with one of the leading cellular phone operators of the country.

It was learned that the B. League committee was also trying to lay a

fixture for this year's tournament that will considerably reduce chances of fixed matches, especially towards the end of the competition.

The inaugural professional league last year was marred by alleged fixed matches and the federation has yet to find out a solution to stop such games or punish the guilty, mainly because of the big teams' involvement in foul play.

Salahuddin also hinted at bringing foreign teams in the Super Cup.

"We are not inviting any foreign teams in the first Super Cup because we want to ensure that the (prize) money stays home. But in future, when the tournament gets a shape, we will invite foreign teams. This will enhance the standard as well giving the crowd more excitement," added the BFF chief.

NCA's first four-dayer from today

SPORTS REPORTER

The GP-BCB National Cricket Academy (NCA) take on Sri Lanka Cricket Development XI in the first four-dayer at Dambulla today.

The tourists played a two-day warm up match against Sri Lanka Academy team, which ended in a draw.

The BCB team will play the second four-dayer against the same opponents over September 16-19 at Premadasa Stadium in Colombo.

After completion of the four-dayers they will play three one-day matches.

Matuail win

SPORTS REPORTER

Matuail Udayan Sangsad managed a solitary goal victory over Friends Social Welfare Organisation in the Second Division Football League at the Birshreshtha Mohammad Mostafa Kamal Stadium in Kamalapur yesterday.

Ismail netted the all-important goal in the 45th minute.

Four matches of the league will be held today at two different venues.

Sourav to quit soon?

Cricket

AFP, New Delhi

Former India captain Sourav Ganguly may quit international cricket "sooner rather than later" with him facing the axe for the upcoming home series against Australia, a report said Tuesday.

The 36-year-old was left out of the Rest of India squad for the five-day Irani Cup match against Ranji Trophy champions Delhi in Vadodara from September 24, seen as a trial match for next month's Test series.

Ganguly's omission from a virtual Test line-up that includes fellow seniors Sachin Tendulkar, Rahul Dravid, Anil Kumble and Venkatesh Lakshman means he is unlikely to figure in the highly anticipated series starting in Bangalore on October 9.

The Telegraph newspaper, published from Ganguly's home city of Kolkata, said the stylish left-hander may not attempt to make a comeback into the Indian team.

"The fight may just have gone out of Sourav Ganguly," the paper said in a front-page story.

"The former captain could

decide to call it a day -- sooner rather than later -- instead of striving for a return to the Team India dressing room."

The paper quoted an unnamed person close to Ganguly saying: "I don't think he is hungry the way he was, say, two years ago."

Ganguly, India's most successful Test captain with 21 wins, was sacked in 2005 and later dropped from both the Test and one-day team after a public spat with the then coach, Australian batting great Greg Chappell.

But he returned to the Test squad in late 2006, emerging as the highest scorer in the away series in South Africa and making useful contributions against England and the home series against the South Africans.

The selectors, however, ignored Ganguly for the Irani Cup after he averaged just 16 in three Tests on the recent tour of Sri Lanka, which the hosts won 2-1.

Tendulkar, who averaged 15 on that tour, and Dravid, who averaged 24, were given another chance by the five-man selection committee headed by former Test captain Dilip Vengsarkar.

"I have no reaction, no comments," Ganguly told The Telegraph.

England's 15 for Stanford

Cricket

CRICINFO, undated

England's selectors have named a 15-man squad for the Stanford Super Series and the seven-match one-day tour of India that gets underway in November, with Ryan Sidebottom earning a recall after an injury disrupted season. He comes in to replace Tim Bresnan in a squad that is otherwise unchanged from the team that defeated South Africa 4-0 in the recent NatWest Series.

And, in a separate announcement, England have unveiled their list of 12 centrally contracted players for the 2008-09 season, as well as a new seven-man Increment Contract list, tailored for those players who are regular squad members, if not guaranteed first-team players.

As widely anticipated, Matthew Hoggard -- who has not played for

England since the tour of New Zealand in March -- is the most notable absentee from the senior contracts list. Stuart Broad, who replaced Hoggard in the team for the second Test of that series in Wellington and has been a notable performer with bat and ball ever since, has been rewarded for his efforts with his first full contract.

There are few surprises in the contracts list, although one man who will be relieved to feature is the former England captain, Michael Vaughan. He has not played limited-overs cricket for more than a year and has been struggling for form in the first-class game as well. Nevertheless his retention is a reward for his diligent service as captain, and will be a significant boost to his morale ahead of next summer's Ashes.

"The award of an England central contract to Michael Vaughan reflects the selectors' view that Michael still has a role to play in the England Test squad over the next 12

months," said the national selector, Geoff Miller. "As we build toward the Ashes in 2009, we feel that Michael's experience of previous Ashes campaigns and his excellent personal record against Australia will be an important asset to the squad."

Miller added that he was delighted that Broad had earned a full contract for the first time in his career. "Stuart has made rapid progress over the past year and adapted extremely well to the challenges of both Test and one-day international cricket."

The fact that England have named the same squad for both the Stanford Series and the one-dayers is clearly in the interests of team unity, even though a player like Alastair Cook, who rarely clears the ropes in any form of the game, can hardly expect to feature in the big-money match.

"The selectors would like to congratulate the team on an out

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Marcus coming back?

Cricket

INTERNET, undated

Marcus Trescothick has admitted he would consider a dramatic return to Test cricket for next summer's Ashes series.

The classy left-hander announced his retirement from international cricket in March after suffering with bouts of homesickness and depression while on tour with England.

Trescothick's six-year stint at the top of the England order saw him register 14 Test centuries at an average of 43.79 -- statistics which back up just how important he was, and still could be to the national side.

And with England struggling to find a solid opening partnership, many players and pundits have been drawn to Trescothick's potentially Championship-winning performances for Somerset this season.

One man who has made no secret of his admiration for the 32-year-old is newly-appointed England captain Kevin Pietersen,

and Trescothick revealed there has been contact between the two about a return to the Test arena.

"We have been in contact over the last couple of weeks just to say well played in the last series and to talk about the start to his career as captain," he told Sky Sports News.

"We don't approach the subject really, he just tries to twist my arm a bit but I told him the truth, I didn't want to beat around the bush really -- I have no aspirations of making it back playing for England at the moment."

Pietersen clearly has strong persuasive powers, evidence of which comes after the England skipper lured Steve Harmison back to the one-day set-up this summer after the Durham paceman initially retired in 2007.

However, Trescothick admits there is far more at stake for himself should he decide to dust off the England sweater and make himself available again to the national selectors.

"It's a little bit different my situation and I laid it down pretty quick," he said.

"I said as much as I would love to get back and play tomorrow if I could, there's a massive price I have to pay to do that and that for me is not worth taking."

With Australia set to return to England next summer looking to avenge their 2005 disappointment, Trescothick admits the lure of an Ashes comeback could be too hard to resist.

"I feel I could play in England and I would cope with that okay, I don't think I could cope with playing abroad, so if they said they needed me for one Test I would give it a lot of thought," he said.

"I think what they have got to be really careful about is they don't want to bring someone in for one Test."

"I'd think about it but I have retired and as I said I have no aspirations to play at the moment."

"They have started off really nicely since Kevin has taken over and India is a huge challenge because it is one of the hardest places to go and play, they are a good side and in their own country they are very, very tough to beat."



PHOTO: AFP

FIVE IN A ROW: Swiss star Roger Federer falls to the ground in ecstasy after defeating Andy Murray of the United Kingdom to win the US Open men's singles title at the Flushing Meadows on Monday.

Awards don't mean much to Gautam

PTI, New Delhi

Even after emerging as the second highest ODI run getter in 2008, left-handed batsman Gautam Gambhir is not disappointed at not being nominated for the annual ICC Awards as he says the pride of representing the nation is ultimate to him.

"I don't think about creating record or winning awards. What I want is to put up my best effort on the ground and contribute to the national team," Gambhir told PTI-Bhasha.

During the year, the Delhi cricketer has made 944 runs from 23 one-dayers with an average of 47.20. The only cricketer ahead of him is India one-day skipper Mahendra Singh Dhoni, who has made 955 runs from 24 matches. Gambhir expressed satisfaction about his performance and said he was concentrating on rectifying the problems to continue with this form.

"I am quite happy with my form. I have worked hard on my week points and it's nice to contribute to my team continuously." The Delhi batsman said he wants to keep helping the team in the upcoming Test series against Australia at home.

"There is still sometime for the series against Australia so I want to first give my best in the Mohammad Nissar Cup and Irani Cup."

The performance in the Irani

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Federer's fabulous fifth

AP, New York



Roger Federer owns a dazzling array of shots, a keen court sense and a winning disposition.

He's also got a pretty good set of ears. And he could hear what the tennis world was saying about him: At 27, his reign at the top was over.

"I was aware of it," he said.

Whatever, that version of the vulnerable Federer was nowhere to be seen at Center Court Monday. Instead, the Roger of old returned, overwhelming Andy Murray 6-2, 7-5, 6-2 to win his fifth straight US Open championship and 13th Grand Slam title.

"I felt like I was invincible for a while again," Federer said.

Federer won his first major title of the year, breezing through three sets without a double-fault and leading 36-16 in winners. He earned nearly half his points at net, a skill he honed while winning the Olympic gold medal in doubles.

When Murray's final shot landed in the net, Federer fell to his knees on the blue court at Arthur Ashe Stadium and rolled onto his back.

"I always knew that if I were to get one Slam under my belt, especially the last one, things weren't looking that bad, like everybody was talking about," he said.

Because, for sure, people were talking. His reaction to all that jabbering?

"Sometimes, to a point, a bit

annoyed because all sorts of crazy people started writing me and trying to reach me, telling me I need some help either mentally or physically," he said. "You're laughing, but it's the way it goes. People come out of the closet and think they can start helping me now. It's just a pain."

"For me, this sort of puts them to rest a little bit and calms down the phones at my parents' a little bit, which I'm happy about," the Swiss ace said.

While Federer enjoyed a glass of champagne with family and friends inside the locker room, his dad wandered out.

"Maybe you can't win everything," proud pop Robert said. "After the French Open, you could see many (negative) comments saying, 'Federer is gone,' 'Federer will never win another Grand Slam.' And Federer proved the opposite."

Federer won't leave New York with the No. 1 ranking -- after 4 1/2 years on top, he lost that to Rafael Nadal -- but the No. 2 seed sure enjoyed getting the silver trophy, the 1.5 million dollars winner's check and a new Lexus.

All in all, a nice way to end a season that Federer began with a bout of mononucleosis.

The sixth-seeded Murray went into his first Grand Slam final with a 2-1 lifetime record against the champ. But trying to become the first British man to win the US Open since Fred Perry in 1936, he never had a chance.

"I came up against, in my opinion, the best player ever to

play the game," Murray said. "He definitely set the record straight today."

The 21-year-old Scotsman paid tribute to Federer when they met at the net.

"He told me that it was a great tournament for me. I said that I agreed with everyone that he'd had a terrible year," Murray kidded.

"Making the semis of Australia, final of the French, the final at Wimbledon -- playing one of the best matches of all-time -- winning a gold medal, and obviously winning the US Open," he said. "I told him that he had a phenomenal year, regardless of what anyone said."

Federer became the first man since Bill Tilden in the 1920s to win this tournament so many times in a row. He's now within one major title of matching Pete Sampras's career record of 14.

"One thing's for sure," Federer said, "I'm not going to stop at 13. That would be terrible."

This win also made Federer the only man in tennis history to take five straight titles at two major tournaments.

"It's nice to compare five US Opens to five Wimbledon. Not many -- nobody can do that," he said.

Murray was the fifth different opponent Federer had played in the finals at Flushing Meadows during his run. The former US Open junior champion won the opening coin toss and, based on his previous success, chose to let Federer serve first.

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Up-and-coming Murray

APP, New York



Andy Murray's runner-up finish at the US Open served as a fitting exclamation point to a superb season that saw him win three of his six career titles and climb to a career-best fourth in the ATP rankings.

"I have been getting consistently better," Murray said. "My rankings have been moving up steadily and this being my first big Grand Slam a lot of things have gotten much better."

The 21-year-old Scotsman competed in his first career Grand Slam final on Monday, losing 6-2, 7-5, 6-2 to Swiss star Roger Federer, who won the US Open title for the fifth consecutive year to capture his 13th Grand Slam crown.

Murray joins John Lloyd (1977 Australian Open) and Canadian-born Greg Rusedski (1997 US Open) as the only British players to reach a Grand Slam final in tennis' modern era.

He burst onto the scene in 2008 with the most productive run of his career. Murray is hoping to one day become the first British man to

capture a Grand Slam title since Fred Perry won the 1936 US Championships.

Federer and Nadal have dominated the Slam finals but this year's US Open showed that rising stars like Murray and Argentina's Juan Martin Del Potro are ready to compete with the big guns.

"I know that mentally and physically I can get to a Grand Slam now," Murray said. "I hope this will be the start of big things for me but I am going to have to put a lot of work in."

Murray reduced Del Potro to tears in winning an emotional and physically exhausting four-hour marathon in the quarterfinals. He survived a five-set match in the round of 16 by rallying from two sets down to beat Austria's Jurgen Melzer.

In the semifinals, he upset world No. 1 Rafael Nadal in a match that was played over two days because of the remnants of a tropical storm, that passed over the New York area.

"It was my goal to win the tournament," said Murray of Dunblane. "I played Del Potro and he hadn't lost for however long. I played Nadal the No. 1 player in the world followed by Federer. Right now I am not really expected to win all of those matches."

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PHOTO: AFP

Andy Murray of the United Kingdom reacts with disappointment during the US Open final against Roger Federer of Switzerland at the Flushing Meadows on Monday.