



Did U Know?

In 1982 Italian goalkeeper Dino Zoff became the first keeper to captain a FIFA World Cup winning team.



What to Watch

Neo Cricket

India v England
Second Test, Day Four
Live from 10:00am

ESPN

Sportscentre India
Sports News
Live at 8:30pm
English Premier League
Everton v Chelsea
Live from 1:55am (Tuesday)



Talk Turkey



Roque Santa Cruz

(Blackburn striker)
"Everybody knows my opinion [regarding a possible transfer], I am happy at Blackburn but also I want to keep improving my football and remain ambitious."



BCB XI v Sri Lankans

3-day warm-up match, Day 2
Venue: BKSP
Nat'l Cricket League
(Four-Dayer, Day Two)
Rajshahi v Khulna
Venue: Rajshahi Divisional Stadium, Dhaka v Barisal
Venue: Fatullah Cricket Stadium, Sylhet v Chittagong
Venue: Sylhet Divisional Stadium, Citycell B. League
Brothers Union v Khulna Abahani
Venue: Bangabandhu National Stadium
Time: 4:30pm

'I'm not at my best'

PTL, Mohali

India off-spinner Harbhajan Singh on Sunday admitted that he was not being able to produce his best bowling so far against England in the ongoing two-match Test series.

"I am not bowling at my best in this series. Last series I really bowled well," said Harbhajan after he picked just one wicket, conceding 56 runs so far in the second and final Test here.

Harbhajan said he would have work on some of the aspects of his bowling to return to his fiery best.

"I am just trying to bowl good line and length. After the match I will try to work on things like seam positioning," he said.

Harbhajan also confessed he had no answer to England captain Kevin Pietersen's switch-hit shot.

"I've seen him once hitting to [Muttiah] Muralidaran, but you can't do anything about it. He is tremendous," the Punjab bowler said showering praise on Pietersen, who led a spirited England fightback with a superb 144.

"I wish I could hit him with bat," Harbhajan quipped only to add that "I haven't seen many guys batting like this." About the pitch, Harbhajan said it was getting slower.

"Pitch is getting slower and slower. I have to do my bit now. If (the wicket) was dry after the sun shone today," he said as the fog delayed the start of the third day's play in the morning.

No play on Day One

BISHWAJIT ROY

The first day's play of the three-day practice match between the Sri Lankans and BCB XI was called off without a ball being bowled due to wet conditions at the BKSP cricket ground yesterday.

The dense fog, which currently has blanketed the whole country, continued to make sure that there would be no play on the opening day of the tour opener but it was actually the damp pitch which finally ensured there would be no play.

Nobody expected a timely start as there was a forecast of moderate to heavy fog for a few more days but the sun came suddenly for a while to give a ray of hope.

And many thought the visitors might take the opportunity but the Lankans were not ready to take any risk in the slippery ground ahead of the two-match series against the Tigers that will start on December 26 at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur.

The home side led by Rajin Saleh had the same sentiment and match referee Roquibul Hasan explained the reasons

why both sides were reluctant to play the match.

"Two umpires along with both captains inspected the pitch and found that sunshine and wind would be needed to dry the damp pitch and that's why we have decided to call off the day's play at 2:10pm," said the former Bangladesh captain.

The huge crowd that was kept waiting outside the main gate for long were given permission to enter into the premises by the authority only when the decision had been taken.

It always offered a great atmosphere in the picturesque ground to watch any cricket match. The bad weather however spoiled the chance.

But sportsmen can't sit ideal in front of the ground and both teams played football in the chilly weather to allow the enthusiastic crowds to watch some action from the surrounding embankment.

In the end the question was whether it the game could resume on the second day. The sunshine in the afternoon however gave the hope and without any doubt the visitors would be happy if they got the chance to have match practice before going into the main battle.



LET'S PLAY INDOOR SPORT: With dense fog dictating terms outside, the Sri Lankan cricketers are seen engrossed in a different kind of sport at the BKSP in Savar where the first day's play of the three-day practice against BCB XI was called off yesterday without a ball being

PHOTO: STAR

Tickets available from tomorrow

SPORTS REPORTER

The tickets for the first Test between Bangladesh and Sri Lanka will go on sale at all nominated branches of AB Bank Limited in Dhaka from tomorrow.

The first Test will start from December 26 at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur and the tickets will also be available at designated ticket booths of the stadium on match days.

Details of tickets for the second Test and the tri-nation series and the ODI series between Bangladesh and Zimbabwe will be announced later.

The ticket rates are: VIP Grand Stand-Tk. 500.00, Club House-Tk. 150.00, and Special Enclosure-Tk. 100.00 and Gallery-Tk. 50.00

Henry suffers eye injury

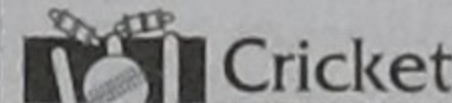
SPORTS REPORTER

The new national cricket team physiotherapist Michael Henry suffered an injury during Tigers practice session at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium yesterday.

It was not so common that team physio gets injured during a practice session but the 26-year-old Henry was the unfortunate one when a throw from wicketkeeper Mushfiqur Rahim hit his eyebrow during fielding.

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De Villiers does it for Proteas finally



CRICINFO, undated

AB de Villiers erased a lingering hoodoo for South Africa as they sealed their most satisfying win with a record-breaking chase of 414 for 4 that buried Australia in the first Test at the WACA on Sunday.

Since coming back into the international arena in the early 1990s, South Africa have had the most trouble with Australia and finally conquered them, with de Villiers

fighting to 106 and Jacques Kallis and the debutant JP Duminy producing nerveless half-centuries on the fifth and final day of the match.

In a thrilling and stomach-turning adventure in the top-of-the-table contest, South Africa registered the second-biggest successful pursuit in history and did it so comfortably that they could have got 500. Australia's only answer was Mitchell Johnson, who took a career-best 159 for 11, but the rest of the performance was as worrying as South Africa's was outstanding.

Graeme Smith, who set up the chase with 108, watched his team drop the hosts to 3 for 15 on the opening morning, but it was not ahead again until after lunch on the final day. It has been like a handicap sprint race, with the runners not coming together until the final ten metres. South Africa finished with more than their chests in front to capture an invaluable 1-0 lead in the three-match series, which resumes in Melbourne on Boxing Day.

Smith helped reduce the original target to 187 for the

final day and de Villiers and Kallis chipped away at it during a gripping 124-run stand that dented the Australians. de Villiers, who then grabbed Duminy, hit the winning runs to finish on 50 not out, and together they took care of the next 111. At the finish, when Duminy pushed a three through cover, he jumped as high as the whole team felt.

Australia's senior players had grown increasingly annoyed at the situation, but Peter Siddle and Jason Krejza are not Shane Warne and Glenn McGrath. Brett Lee does not even seem like the same man. This is a devastating defeat and continues their slide in 2008. If they lose this series their rating as the world's No. 1 will be as misleading as presents being the meaning of Christmas.

There was little to cheer on the final day for Australia. In South Africa the supporters deserve to be delicious. Their team has fought and scrapped and succeeded in a way that was unimaginable, against an outfit which has tormented them for years. Nervous but committed, the players tried not to give away their mood, but when 52 was required there was even a smile in the dressing room from Smith. Those who expected late shocks -- of course we did -- were disappointed as de Villiers and Duminy showed an assurance that was missing in the country's previous failures.

Singles came at will throughout the day, risky shots were barely needed, and there was little danger of being caught in the slips, mainly because Ricky Ponting wasn't really bothering with them. After lunch, with 92 needed, Siddle and Krejza were brought on while Johnson and Lee fielded. The main men, the only ones capable of hurrying the batsmen, were resting. Like sponsorship commitments, player workloads are now apparently too severe on the field as well.

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Farashganj blow for Abahani

SPORTS REPORTER



Abahani's start to the second half of the Citycell B. League became sour when the defending champions stumbled to a goalless draw against Farashganj yesterday.

Abahani, who ended the first leg with a three-point lead over city rivals Mohammedan and Brothers, will remain atop the table despite their second draw that saw them collect their 23rd point from 11 matches. However, it will encourage the other title chasers a shot at the pole position if the league leaders keep showing similar ordinary form.

It was Farashganj who looked the better side of the two on a chilly winter evening at the Bangabandhu National Stadium and Emeke Lucky came close to stun their mighty rivals after 11 minutes.

The tall Nigerian defender leaped above the Abahani backline to nod the ball towards the

goal during a corner with stand-in captain and goalkeeper Biplab helplessly standing in the centre. However, Ghanaian centre-back Samad Yussif rescued Abahani with a timely clearance from the face of the goal.

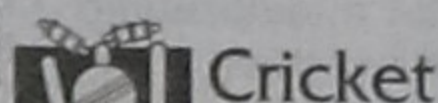
The Sky-Blues defence was caught napping often and they were fortunate not to concede four minutes later when Nigerian striker Kalu Johnson set his partner Enamul, whose low drive was just off the mark.

Amalesh Sen's league leaders, struggling with a number of injuries, never had the cutting edge in the middle as they had to field two holding midfielders in Pranotosh and Joy. Abul, who had scored the lone goal in Abahani's 1-0 away win over Farashganj at Narshingdi in the first-leg clash, hardly looked effective while the other midfielder -- top-scorer Emeke -- was looking for supplies in the scoring zone rather than creating chances.

Emeke eventually got one when he picked up Pranotosh's centre from the right at the near post but failed to keep his header on target to

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India hit back late after KP century



AFP, Mohali

the end," he said.

"My decision could have gone either way. I thought it was going down leg and I would get the benefit of the doubt.

"If Flintoff and me had waited another session, we would have fought to win the game. India are in a better position now."

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PHOTO: AFP

LEADING FROM THE FRONT: England captain Kevin Pietersen slog sweeps one over fine leg during his fine knock of 144 on the third day of the second Test against India in Mohali yesterday.

BCB names nat'l pool

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh Cricket Board yesterday released a 17-member national pool for the upcoming Premier Cricket League.

Last season the restriction for each Premiership side was three each from the pool and it is expected that it will remain the same for the season 2008-09.

The pool has been made from players who have appeared for the national team during seventh-month period of April 1 to October 30 of this year.

Most of the pool players have already been snapped up by most of the big clubs. Mohammad Ashraful has been confirmed by Gazi Tank along with Nayeem Islam while Mashrafe Bin Mortaza is expected to appear for defending champions Abahani.

Zunaed Siddiqui and Rajin Saleh are linked with Surjo Tarun while Mehrab Hossain looks set to remain with Old DOHS where Mahmudullah Riyad has been rumoured to have moved.

It is also expected that Shakib Al Hasan and Mushfiqur Rahim will move to bigger clubs after appearing for BKSP last season.

POOL

Mohammad Ashraful, Mashrafe Bin Mortaza, Shahadat Hossain, Syed Rasel, Shakib Al Hasan, Mushfiqur Rahim, Tamim Iqbal, Mehrab Hossain, Rokibul Hasan, Mahmudullah Riyad, Zunaed Siddiqui, Nazmul Hossain, Dollar Mahmud, Rajin Saleh, Nayeem Islam, Imrul Kayes, Mahbubul Alam.

Destiny, Leonine put pressure on Biman

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh Biman dropped one point yesterday but retained pole position in the Dutch-Bangla Bank First Division Chess League with 26.6 points.

Biman defeated I2 Soft Solution 3-1 at the Chess Federation hall room but after eight rounds, their lead was trimmed to just half a point with Destiny 2000 and Leonine putting pressure on the leaders.

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PHOTO: FILE

DANCING ASSASSIN: South Africa middle-order batsman AB de Villiers played with patience and panache during his match-winning knock of unbeaten 106 on the fifth and final day of the first Test against Australia in Perth yesterday.

Arafat 7 wrecks Barisal

SPORTS REPORTER



Arafat Sunny demolished a lacklustre Barisal while fellow title contenders Rajshahi dominated proceedings during the first day of the final round National Cricket League matches yesterday.

The Dhaka left-armed took seven wickets as the visitors were bowled out for just 125 runs at the Fatullah Cricket Stadium. Dhaka though made a terrible start, losing three wickets for 43 before bad light ended play.

Khulna made a modest 255 but ensured they did not give away an extra point to the hosts at the Rajshahi Divisional Stadium as they declared after losing nine wickets. The home side were seven without loss after just one over.

Away in Sylhet, Chittagong scored 278 for five at the only venue where full play was possible.

DHAKA-BARISAL

Dhaka loaded up their bowling attack with lots of spinners and it was not a surprise when one of them started to take control.

Long considered as one for the future, Arafat Sunny never made it big before last season when his performance for Premier League champions Abahani gave him a place in the Bangladesh A side.

His rise took another step with yesterday's

performance as his accuracy paid off. He removed openers Rony Talukdar and Nasiruddin Faruque before taking the key wicket of the visitors' captain Imran Ahmed, who was trapped leg-before for three.

He gave the Barisal tail no chance, taking four more and the end of the innings came when fellow left-armed Elias Sunny took his second wicket in the 51st over.

Only Hannan Sarkar made some contribution for the visitors with 30 off 74 balls.

Another Arafat, Arafat Salahuddin, made sure Barisal had some hold on the game. He took three late wickets including the wicket of dangerous Marshall Ayub. Play was called off due to bad light after play began an hour later than schedule.

RAJSHAHI-KHULNA

Left-arm spinner Suharwardi Shuvo gave Rajshahi the day's first breakthrough when he ended the 62-run opening stand between Nazmus Sadat, who made 59, and Rabiul Islam. Shuvo removed the robust Rabiul for 26 and then took two more after lunch as Khulna went to tea at 185 for three.

He took three more to round off a good bowling performance before Khulna captain Tushar Imran declared the innings at the end of the 74th over. Shafiqul Islam also took two wickets.

Bad light came into play yet again as the

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