

Superb start by Satkhira

SPORTS REPORTER

Fatema slammed a double-hattrick and Jannat three goals as Satkhira got off to an explosive start in the Buriganga zone opener of the Citycell Women's Football Championship in Dhaka yesterday.

Satkhira brushed aside Thakurgaon 14-0 with the other goals for the winners coming from Khadeja (2), Sonia, Sabina and Shamsunnahar at the Bangabandhu National Stadium.

Earlier, Bangladesh Football Federation senior vice-president Abdus Salam Murshedi declared the Dhaka zone meet open.

In Teesta zone, Jessore defeated Rajshahi by a solitary goal in the zonal final at the Dinajpur Stadium with Shahinur separating the two sides after 65 minutes. Both the teams have already qualified for the final round.

Gaibandha cricket

OUR CORRESPONDENT

STS Club defeated UNNS Club by ten wickets while Russel Smrity Sangsad beat Thanapara Cricket Club by a single wicket in the Gaibandha Second Division Cricket League at local stadium yesterday.

In the first match, UNNS managed only 99 runs losing all their wickets in exactly 20 overs. In reply, STS accumulated the winning target without losing any of their wickets in 14.5 overs.

In the other match, Thanapara were bowled out for 125 in their twenty overs which was successfully chased by Russel Sangsad in 19.5 overs losing nine wickets.

Ganguly to play one-dayers of Ranji Trophy

CRICINFO, undated

Sourav Ganguly will play for Bengal in the Ranji Trophy one-dayers which begin on February 15. Jagmohan Dalmiya, the president of the Cricket Association of Bengal, confirmed that Ganguly had agreed to play for his state side.

However Dalmiya was not certain if Ganguly would play all the matches of the tournament. Earlier in the season he helped Bengal earn a promotion to the Ranji Super League.

The Bengal selectors are expected to name the squad later today. Bengal's first game is against Jharkhand in Kolkata on the opening day.

This tournament could serve as a warm-up for Ganguly, who is scheduled to play the Indian Premier League in April. He last played competitive cricket in December during the four-day Ranji Trophy. Ganguly retired from international cricket in November after India's home series against Australia.

Hair urges them to quit

CRICINFO, undated

Darrell Hair, the former international umpire at the centre of the furore surrounding the 2006 Oval Test, has called on all the International Cricket Council (ICC) board members involved in the original decision to change the result of the match to resign. Last weekend the ICC executive voted to overturn its ruling altering the result of the game from an England win to a draw.

"All the board members who were involved in the earlier decision should resign now," Hair said. "And this should also include the present ICC president David Morgan. The first to go should be David Richardson (the ICC's general manager -- cricket) and Doug Cowie (the ICC's manager for umpires)."

"I felt the gun was loaded by the ICC board, and Richardson and [the chief executive] Malcolm Speed were only too happy to pull the trigger."



Did U Know?

India batsman Virender Sehwag scored his tenth one-day century in the third match against Sri Lanka on Tuesday.



Action from yesterday's Citycell Women's Football Championship match between Satkhira and Thakurgaon at the Bangabandhu National Stadium.

PHOTO: COURTESY

Pakistan's home ODIs at Abu Dhabi, Dubai?

Cricket

AFP, Karachi

Australia are unlikely to tour Pakistan to play a five-match one-day series and a Twenty20 game because of lingering fears over security in the troubled nation, a top official said Wednesday.

The latest blow to Pakistan cricket follows a decision by the International Cricket Council (ICC) Sunday to relocate the 2009 Champions Trophy away from the country.

Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) chairman Ijaz Butt told AFP by telephone that the Australia series was unlikely to take place in Pakistan in April after a meeting with Cricket Australia officials in Melbourne.

"It (the series) is unlikely to be played in Pakistan," Butt said. "We are discussing dates and venues, which I will let the

media know when I return on Friday," he said.

Australia have not toured Pakistan since 1998, concerned about players' safety in a nation beset by continuing militant violence.

They postponed a tour of the country in March last year after a spate of suicide bombings but agreed to reschedule the tour into two separate visits -- a one-day series in 2009 and Tests in 2010.

Australia earlier refused to tour Pakistan in 2002 in the wake of the September 11, 2001 attacks on the United States. Matches were instead played in Sri Lanka and the United Arab Emirates (UAE).

In anticipation of Australia's latest refusal, the PCB had offered various venues to Australia -- the UAE, Malaysia, Ireland and England.

Sources close to the board said Pakistan would likely play three one-day matches in Abu

Dhabi and two one-dayers and the Twenty20 match in Dubai.

The games will be played after Australia finish their tour of South Africa in mid-April.

Following a meeting of the ICC board in Perth, Australia, on Sunday, ICC chief executive Haroon Lorgat said the "safety and security environment" in Pakistan had forced a relocation of the eight-nation Champions Trophy.

The second-biggest one-day tournament in world cricket behind the World Cup, the Champions Trophy had already been delayed 12 months to September this year because of concerns over player safety.

More than 1,500 people have been killed in militant attacks across Pakistan in the past 19 months and more than 1,500 troops have been killed at the hands of extremists since 2002, after Islamabad joined the US-led "war on terror."

Sagar stays atop

SPORTS REPORTER

Reigning champion FM Minhazuddin Ahmed Sagar maintained solo lead in the BASIC Bank 30th National Junior Chess Championships when he defeated Abdullah Al Saif in the eighth round at the Chess Federation hall-room yesterday.

Sagar pushed his collection to 7.5 points with one round remaining to stay half a point ahead of Shamima Akter Liza, who beat Masum Hossain.

Sharif Hossain was also at second place with seven points after beating Rezaul Hossain Babu.

Mohammad Imran Ali Elin and Ikramul Haque Siam shared the third place with 6.5 points.

In other 8th round games, Elin beat Mahfuzur Rahman and Siam beat Shah Jalal Faruk.

Lanka recall Malinga for Twenty20

AFP, Colombo

Fast bowler Lasith Malinga has been included in Sri Lanka's squad for next week's Twenty20 match against India, selectors announced here on Tuesday.

Malinga, out of action due to a knee injury, made his last international appearance in February 2008 in a one-dayer against Australia in Melbourne. He has so far played 28 Tests, 53 one-dayers and seven Twenty20 matches.

The Twenty20 game starts here on February 10. The selectors kept the same one-day squad for the last two games of the ongoing five-match series against the tourists, to be held here on Thursday and Sunday.

T20 SQUAD

Tillakaratne Dilshan (captain), Sanath Jayasuriya, Jehan Mubarak, Chamara Kapugedera, Chamara Silva, Indika de Saram, Lasith Malinga, Dilhara Fernando, Farveez Maharoof, Kaushal Weeraratne, Malinga Bandara, Jeevantha Kulatunga, Dilhara Lokuhettige, Mahela Udawatte, Thilan Thushara.

ODISQUAD

Mahela Jayawardene (captain), Sanath Jayasuriya, Kumar Sangakkara, Upul Tharanga, Tillakaratne Dilshan, Chamara Kapugedera, Jehan Mubarak, Farveez Maharoof, Muttiah Muralidaran, Ajantha Mendis, Dilhara Fernando, Nuwan Kulasekara, Thilan Thushara, Angelo Mathews.

Afghans get rapturous welcome

AFP, Kabul

Afghanistan's fledgling cricket team returned home Tuesday flush with victory from Argentina but calling for financial support as they prepare for the 2011 World Cup qualifying ground.

The team was greeted at Kabul International Airport by a mob of enthusiastic fans who presented them with garlands and escorted the players on a small parade through the city.

"We never even thought we could expect to do so well," the team's secretary general, Taj Malik, told AFP. "But the team's main test is still ahead of us."

Victory in the World League Division Three has moved Afghanistan into April's World Cup qualifying round in South Africa. A place in the top two in their group will guarantee a spot in the 2011 World Cup.

India to test bench

Fourth Sri Lanka-India ODI today

Cricket

PTI, Colombo

Having clinched the five-match series by taking an unassailable 3-0 lead, India will try out some of their reserve players when they take on Sri Lanka in an inconsequential fourth one-dayer here on Thursday, seeking to notch up a record-breaking ninth consecutive win.

Although the visitors would ideally like to make a clean sweep of the series, giving an opportunity to the bench players will be their priority in the remaining two games.

Everything has gone well for Mahendra Singh Dhoni and his men in the series and the team will be keen to keep the winning sequence going.

The Indian batting has been far superior than the home team and the bowling has also been quite disciplined to bring about the desired results.

Dhoni made it clear after Tuesday's win that giving reserve players a chance to prove themselves was more important than retaining the winning squad in pursuit of their record ninth straight ODI win.

"We are not looking at the record. Rather, we will give

chance to players who didn't get a chance to play in the series so far," Dhoni said.

"We are 3-0 up and have already won the series. It gives us an opportunity to play those players. For us, this is the priority. The team is not looking at the record but giving chance to those players," he said.

India humiliated Sri Lanka with a 147-run win under floodlights at the R Premadasa Stadium on Tuesday to seal the series. Sri Lanka, however, have only pride to play for in the remaining matches which are of mere academic interest now.

The home side, who are playing non-stop cricket for last five months, will be under pressure to regroup and rediscover their winning form.

Captain Mahela Jayawardene will have to ensure that his team executed the game plan well to win the next two matches and reclaim their confidence ahead of the busy season.

Jayawardene admitted his team was not up to the standard of Dhoni's India and there were some grey areas to be fixed, especially the bowling which was absolutely off the mark on Tuesday.

The home side's main area of concern would be their bowling after the way Ferveez

Maharoof and Dilhara Fernando performed in the third match returning figures of 68 for nought and 63 for 1 respectively.

Other bowlers -- Nuwan Kulasekara (68-0), Ajantha Mendis (64-1) and Muttiah Muralidaran (60-1) were also no better. "I am disappointed with the bowling," Jayawardene said after the match.

Besides, his main weapons Muralidaran and Mendis will also need to urgently find a way to stop the rampaging Indians.

TEAMS

INDIA (from): Mahendra Singh Dhoni (captain), Gautam Gambhir, Ravindra Jadeja, Zaheer Khan, Praveen Kumar, Pragyan Ojha, Munaf Patel, Irfan Pathan, Yusuf Pathan, Suresh Raina, Virender Sehwag, Ishant Sharma, Rohit Sharma, Sachin Tendulkar, Yuvraj Singh.

SRI LANKA (from): Mahela Jayawardene (captain), Kumar Sangakkara, Sanath Jayasuriya, Upul Tharanga, Chamara Kapugedera, Jehan Mubarak, Tillakaratne Dilshan, Thilina Kandamby, Muttiah Muralidaran, Ajantha Mendis, Farveez Maharoof, Dilhara Fernando, Nuwan Kulasekara, Thilina Thushara, Angelo Mathews.

Bangladesh better Amalesh

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gradually changing and as more women take part in the country's premier sport and with international tournaments like these, women's cricket in Pakistan can definitely move forward. Asked whether most girls in Pakistan women's cricket stem from any particular class, Urooj claimed that it does not make any difference as talent will always make its way irrespective of its origin.

"International matches makes all the difference but there are other alternatives to prepare for big events, such as playing the men's team in the under-15s or under-19s which is what we did before arriving in Dhaka," said the self-assured Muntaz in the captains' press conference.

Country's leading cellular operators Grameenphone is sponsoring the series and it has been a major sponsor ever since the Board has taken up women's cricket seriously a couple of years ago.

"When we started out in 1997 one of our main objectives was women's empowerment, so it's a great opportunity for us to sponsor this tri-nation and take women's cricket forward," said GP's

chief communications officer Rubaba Dowla. Also present during the announcement was BCB marketing and commercial chairman Aziz Al Kaisar and women's wing chairman Abdullah Al Fuaad.

The teams will travel to Bogra today to play the three opening matches while Khulna will play host to the remaining round robin league matches where teams meet each other twice.

The final will be held on February 17 at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur.

Gazi questions

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Defending champions Abahani also played their away match -- in the first leg -- against Khulna Abahani in Dhaka last October. National coach Shafiqul Islam Manik had requested the federation to arrange the match in the capital in a bid to save the national players from travelling for the interest of the national team's preparations for the Merdeka Cup.

The league committee could have switched Abahani's home match to Khulna in the return leg but did not.

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new set of foreign players in the mid-season break have perhaps hampered their campaign, if not the club officials' reported interference on team selection bypassing the coach.

"We don't have any other option but to win all our matches but even if we do that, we can't catch Abahani if they get just one point. In my long career, I have never seen any team in this position to spill from such a comfortable position."

"Abahani will definitely start in a better position and their morale would also be high after beating Mohammedan 2-1 and crushing Brothers 3-0 in their last three matches."

"We are also going to miss Alfaz's strike partner Samir Omari, who is suspended for tomorrow's game," informed Gazi, the senior most coach in the domestic circuit, adding that he has not a proper replacement.

Omari, who has scored five goals in as many appearances, also picked up three bookings and Russel will have to field only two foreigners in Serbian Marco Maric and Moroccan Al Moujahid as Moroccan midfielder Ahmad Reda has left.



PHOTO: INTERNET

ICC CEO Haroon Lorgat (L) and president David Morgan pose with the ICC Test Championship Mace in Melbourne yesterday.

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

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CRYPTOQUIP

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OJJZJ RDS OPSJMHQ. PTHJS
PNN. AJ ARDNL'M'H APMH
HR SDTTNJ PMC TPHEJSQ.
Yesterday's Cryptquip: WHENEVER A FELLOW LOANS YOU HIS PARTY NOISEMAKER, PLEASE MAKE SURE YOU RETURN THE FAVOR.
Today's Cryptquip Clue: I equals E