

Parash in semis

SPORTS REPORTER

Defending five-time champion Ahsan Habib Parash stormed into the men's singles semifinals of the Amicus 29th National Badminton Championships when he came from a set down to beat Saifuddin 17-21, 21-12 and 21-12 in Bogra yesterday.

In the quarterfinals, Mashrafe upset Javed 21-18, 18-21, 21-18 while Rais blanked Tushar 21-14, 21-11 and Enayet defeated Hannan 19-21, 21-10, 21-14.

Parash also reached the men's doubles semis pairing with his Biman teammate Sumon while the other pairs to move into the last four are Enamul and Dulal, Rais and Hannan and Javed and Mukter.

Meanwhile, Shapla and Kanika set a final clash in women's singles. Shapla beat Rozina 21-8, 21-12 and Kanika defeated Elina 21-15, 23-21.

Tongi blank Jirabo

SPORTS REPORTER

Johnny and Sohel Rana scored in the second half to give Tongi KC a 2-0 win against Jirabo SC in yesterday's Citycell 3rd Division Football league at the Bishreshtha Shaheed Mostafa Kamal Stadium in Kamalapur.

The other match between City United and Dilkusha ended in a goalless draw at the same venue.

Sand blow

FROM PAGE 17 the WICB and they should be moving fast to sort it out" quipped Boycott.

Heavy rain in the build-up to the match meant the stadium's nets were flooded and neither side could practice properly.

Instead, they used the nets at the nearby Antigua Recreation Ground (ARC) as a stand-in for Sir Vivian Richards Stadium outfield was prepared.

"This is the game at the highest level - and this is not on," said Sir Viv Richards.

"I had a go at some members of the Antiguan Cricket Association because it is alleged that they were given ample time to get the ground ready and do all the necessary supervising to make sure it was ready."

"They dropped a ball somewhere and I'm appalled at some of these guys who say they are making decisions" said an agitated Richards.

West Indies lead the four-Test series 1-0, after they bowled out England for their third-lowest total in Tests of 51 in the second innings of the opening Test at Kingston to post an innings and 23-run victory inside four days.

The other two Tests in the series take place in Barbados from February 26 to March 2, and in Trinidad from March 2 to 6.

In 1998, the first Test between England and the West Indies in Kingston, Jamaica, was called off after less than an hour's play after both captains agreed that the pitch was unfit for play.

SCOREBOARD

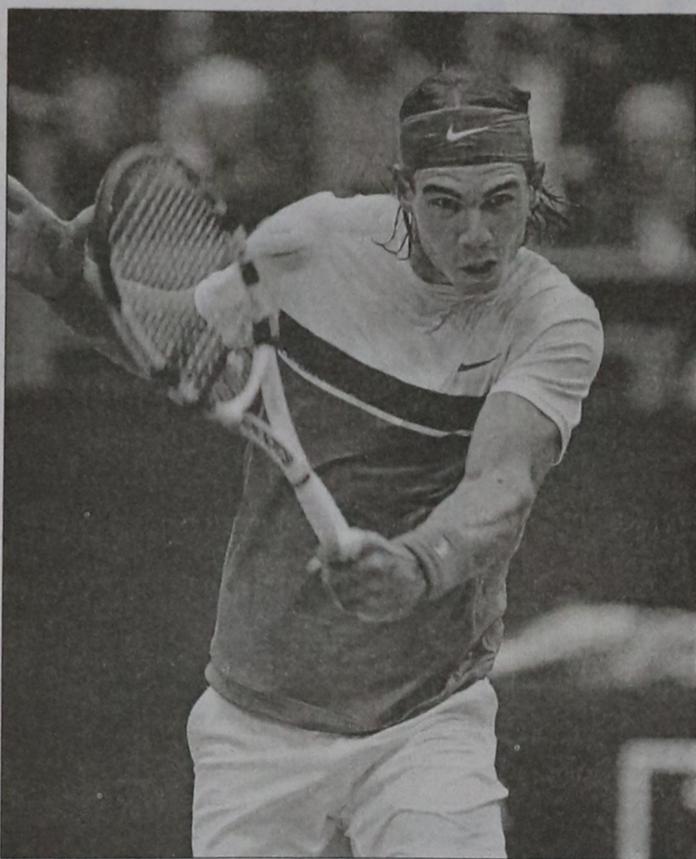
Scoreboard on the opening day of the second Test between West Indies and England at the Vivian Richards Cricket Ground in Antigua on Friday:

ENGLAND: First Innings	6
Cracks not out	1
Coast not out	1
Total: (No loss in 1.4 overs)	7
To bat: Shah, Pietersen, Collingwood, Flintoff, Prior, Broad, Sidebottom, Anderson, Panesar.	
Bowler	O M R W
Taylor	1 0 5 0
Edwards	0.4 0 2 0
WEST INDIES: Gayle, Smith, Sarwan, Hinds, Chandernaul, Nash, Ramdin, Taylor, Benn, Powell, Edwards	
Toss: West Indies	
Umpires: D. Harper, T. Hill	
Match Referee: A. Hurst	



Did U Know?

Only four countries - USA, Japan, China and Indonesia - have won the Uber Cup since its inception in 1956.



Spanish world number one Rafael Nadal plays a backhand against Grigor Dimitrov of Bulgaria during the ATP tournament in Rotterdam on Thursday.

Nadal survives a scare

Tennis

AFP, Rotterdam

Rafael Nadal defeated world number 490 Grigor Dimitrov 7-5, 3-6, 6-2 on Thursday to reach the Rotterdam Open quarterfinals, but the Bulgarian teenager demonstrated his exciting potential as a future star.

World number one Nadal had plenty of problems with the 17-year-old junior Wimbledon and US Open winner who broke the newly-crowned Australian Open champion in the eighth game of the second set on his way to levelling the match.

But Nadal, who has struggled all week on the ultra-fast court here, quickly recovered his poise to reach the last eight although Dimitrov twice had chances in the final set to grab a break before running out of steam.

"He is heading to the top 10, for sure," said the Spaniard, who broke on seven of 12 chances in the tight second round contest.

"It was a really tough match and I had to work to win it."

Nadal, who now faces French seventh seed Jo-Wilfried Tsonga for a semifinal spot, said Dimitrov reminded him of his own early days on the tour.

"I remember when I was 17 and beat (Roger) Federer in Miami. The motivation is great and you have nothing to lose. It was the same for me then."

Andy Murray overcame a raft of errors in a hit-or-miss opening set before posting a grueling 7-6 (7/4), 7-5 win over Italy's Andreas Seppi.

The second seeded Scot struggled to impose himself in the first set which dragged on for

nearly an hour with the world number four needing seven set points, spread over four games, to finally take the lead.

Things improved slightly in the second set with Murray and 36th-ranked Seppi trading breaks in the fourth and fifth games.

Murray benefitted from a Seppi double-fault to take a 6-5 lead and finally got off court on his second match point and after an hour and three-quarters.

"There were a lot of errors from both sides in the first set," said Murray, who lost in the first round here a year ago.

"The standard was not good. Both of us started playing better and by the second set it was really tough. He hits flat and hard and moves really well."

Murray will next face French lucky loser Marc Gicquel, who defeated compatriot Paul-Henri Mathieu 6-4, 6-3.

French fifth seed Gael Monfils, who put out compatriot and defending champion Michael Llodra 6-4, 6-4, will tackle fellow Frenchman Julien Benneteau who booked his last-eight place on Wednesday with an upset win against Russian third seed Nikolay Davydenko.

Croatia's Mario Ancic, a runner-up at Zagreb last weekend, beat French fourth seed Gilles Simon 6-4, 3-6, 6-3.

Ancic has had a troubled few seasons with illness and injury but feels he is now back on his feet.

His defeat of Simon was only his 13th victory against 39 losses when facing top ten opponents. Against the elite, the win was only his second since 2007.

"This is unbelievable," said the 28th ranked Croatian. "Gilles is a top player and they are always very difficult to beat."

Ancic next faces Russian Mikhail Youzhny.

Rain spoils NZ party

FROM PAGE 17 long-hop straight to Diamanti at mid-wicket to depart for nine.

Haddin momentarily went into his shell before bringing up his half-century with a single as he and Ferguson looked to set the launching pad.

The pair finished the innings with a flourish as Ferguson brought up his maiden ODI half-century to a standing ovation at the GABBA.

The 24-year-old blasted seven fours in his 35-ball knock of 55 before Haddin pummelled O'Brien for 14 in the final over to finish the innings in style.

New Zealand, chasing a revised total of 156 from 20 overs, suffered an early setback when explosive opener Brendon McCullum was clean bowled by Ben Hilfenhaus with just the second ball of the innings.

Peter Fulton and Guptill then took the attack to Australia, the former blasting two huge sixes before Nathan Bracken dismissed him for 22.

Guptill was then forced to watch on with anguish at the other end as Ross Taylor (4), Grant Elliott (0), Neil Broom (0) and Kyle Mills (1) all departed.

Reeling on 73-6, Diamanti and Guptill then launched an inspired counter attack to bring New Zealand close to what had earlier seemed an improbable victory.

Guptill passed his second ODI half-century and continued his assault with a flurry of destructive pull shots to put the GABBA crowd on the edge of their seats.

However, with just 33

further runs required from 42 deliveries heavy rain forced umpires Steve Bucknor and Rod Tucker to abandon proceedings.

SCOREBOARD

Scoreboard of the fifth and final one-day international between Australia and New Zealand at Brisbane Cricket Ground on Friday:

AUSTRALIA	Hopes c Vettori b Mills	5
	Haddin not out	88
	Ponting c McCullum b Mills	2
	D Hussey b O'Brien	6
	M Hussey c Diamanti b Vettori	9
	Ferguson not out	55
	Extras: (w-3)	3
	Total: (For 4 wks in 22 overs)	168
	Did not bat: Siddie, White, Johnson, Bracken, Hilfenhaus.	
	Fall of wickets: 1-9, 2-20, 3-30, 4-70.	
Bowler	O M R W	
Mills	4 0 22 2	
Southee	5 0 49 0	
O'Brien	5 0 40 1	
Diamanti	2 0 25 0	
Vettori	4 0 24 1	
Elliott	2 0 8 0	
NEW ZEALAND	McCullum b Hilfenhaus	2
	Guptill not out	64
	Fulton c Ferguson b Bracken	22
	Taylor c M Hussey b Johnson	4
	Elliott c Haddin b Bracken	0
	Broom run out	0
	Mills c M Hussey b Siddie	1
	Diamanti not out	26
	Extras: (lb-1, w-3)	4
	Total: (For 6 wks in 14 overs)	123
	Did not bat: Vettori, Southee, O'Brien.	
	Fall of wickets: 1-2, 2-40, 3-56, 4-68, 5-68, 6-73.	
Bowler	O M R W	
Hilfenhaus	3 0 28 1	
Bracken	3 0 33 2	
Johnson	3 0 28 1	
Siddie	3 0 13 1	
Hopes	2 0 20 0	

Result: No result and 5-match series drawn 2-2.

Man-of-the-series: Mike Hussey.

Toss: New Zealand Umpires: SA Bucknor (West Indies) and RJ Tucker Match referee: RS Mahanama (Sri Lanka)

Vettori

FROM PAGE 17 game pan out to get a result because it could have been a really good game. It probably would have come down to the Extras, so it's a strange feeling. We're happy with the overall 2-2, but still would have loved a chance to win the series."

Only the fantastic draining powers of the Gabba allowed the match to start, but New Zealand had the worst of the batting conditions after beginning their chase in light rain. "It just became too hard, the rain," Vettori said. "You could see the umpires wanted to stay out there to get a result, but it was too hard."

There was further pain for the visitors with injuries to Kyle Mills and Ross Taylor in the greasy conditions. The game was delayed by more than five hours and Mills hurt his right Achilles during his opening spell of 2 for 33.

Shirin, Masuda

FROM PAGE 17 Meanwhile, Begum Laila Alam 3rd Open FIDE Rating Women's chess tournament starts tomorrow at the same venue. The Swiss League competition is an open event.

Bhajji calls for ODI referrals

CRICINFO, undated

Harbhajan Singh, the Indian offspinner, has backed the ICC's umpire referral system and wants it to be implemented in one-dayers also to avoid dubious umpiring decisions.

"The umpire referral system is good for the game, which is aimed at making the game more fair as both batsmen and bowler can refer any controversial decision," he said. "I think the system should also be there in ODIs." The ICC has so far trialled the system in selected Test series, including the ongoing one between England and West Indies.

The system has evoked a mixed response - some people like former umpire Dickie Bird and ECB chairman Giles Clarke are unhappy with the system while others, including former West Indian fast bowler Michael Holding, think it makes use of available technology.

"If it would have been implemented in the ODIs then Sachin Tendulkar would have benefited in Sri Lanka," Harbhajan said. Tendulkar was handed harsh lbw decisions in each of his three innings in the recent one-dayers against Sri Lanka, but India went on to win the series 4-1.

LOCAL SNIPPETS

FROM PAGE 17 as chief guest.

JUNIOR TENNIS

David Thomson of Great Britain and India's Mohit Mayur Jaiprakash reached the final of the boys' singles in the Rajshahi International Junior Tennis Championships at the Zafar Imam Tennis Complex.

Thomson beat his compatriot Mathew Thomson 6-2, 7-5 while Mohit defeated Taipeian Jui Mao Kay 5-7, 6-3, 6-2.

Britain's Mathew and David Thomson beat Ting Chuan (Taipei) and Chuhan Yuang (China) 6-1, 6-1 to become the boys' double champions.

Thailand's Luksika Kumkum defeated India's Anika Raina 6-1, 7-5 to reach the girls' singles final where she will meet Dutch Demi Schuurs, who eliminated Thailand's Kobkanok Upang 6-7, 7-5, 6-2.

In the girls' doubles, Taipeian Huiyi Chen Lee and Thai Kobkanok Upang beat Romanian Joanna Laura and Dutch Demi Schuurs 6-4, 6-4 to lift the title.

MINI HANDBALL

The quarterfinals of the Sunnydale 6th Mini handball tournament will be held today at the Women's Sports Complex in Dhanmondi.

Sunnydale will take on SOS Shishu Pally, British School face Ansar and VDP, St Gregory's meet Loreto and London Grace are pitted against BIS in the race for the semis.

In yesterday's matches, St Gregory's emerged Group-B champions after a 3-3 draw with Scholastica, BIS dumped Summer Field 17-1, London Grace defeated Play-Pen 9-4, Ansar and VDP beat South Point 9-2, SOS Shishu Pally beat Green herald 10-1 and Mary Curie beat Hope International 10-2.

Russel stay

FROM PAGE 17 counter attacks with Rahmatganj having the edge but their hard work went down the drains as Wajed Gazi's defence finally held on to the slim lead.

Rahmatganj, who play Abahani in the final round, remained seventh and confirmed the position with 21 points.

TEAMS

RUSSEL: Azam, Aminul, Hasan, Zahirul (Rakibul), Rajan, Mobarak, Marco Maric, Moujahid, Monwar, Alfaz (Morshed) and Omari. RAHMATGANJ: Ali, Jahangir, Ashraf (Rimon), Shipon, Babu, Felix, Kabir, Hanif, Francis, Ripon (Hirok) and Idris.

TOP GOAL SCORERS

16 goals:	Bukola (Mohammedan), Aliaz (Russel)
14 goals:	Emeka (Abahani)
13 goals:	Idris (Rahmatganj)
12 goals:	Emily (Abahani)
11 goals:	Enamul (Farashganj)
8 goals:	Sakawat Rony (Clg Abahani)
7 goals:	Robin (Mohammedan), Mithun (Clg Abahani)
6 goals:	Henry (Brothers), Raphael (Clg Mohammedan), Zahid (Brothers)
5 goals:	Youness, Omari (Russel), Nasir, Komol (Mohammedan)
4 goals:	Divine (Brothers), Towhidul (Clg MSC), Francis (Rahmatganj)

Buchanan not interested

Cricket

AFP, Sydney

Highly successful former Australia coach John Buchanan said Friday he was "extremely unlikely" to take on the vacant England job ahead of this year's Ashes series.

Hugh Morris, managing director of England cricket, hinted this week that Buchanan could be targeted to take over from interim coach Andy Flower after England's tour of the West Indies.

Buchanan left the Australia job after the 2007 World Cup in the West Indies as elite cricket's most successful coach, with a winning record of 70 per cent since he became national coach in 1999.

England is looking for a new full-time coach following the controversial sacking of Peter Moores last month.

Buchanan, 55, said he had received no formal communication from the England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB), and outside commitments meant he would be unlikely to accept the role.

"It is extremely unlikely for me to accept a full-time coaching role with the English cricket team for a number of reasons," he said.

"I finished the coaching role with CA (Cricket Australia) because I believe in a shelf life for coaches, and in my opinion, I had reached mine by the completion of the World Cup in 2007.

"I am not sure I could travel that road again, and indeed with another country."

Buchanan said he was now focusing on his increasing commitments in the corporate sector.

Morris expressed his admiration of the former Australian mentor in an interview with a British newspaper this week.

"John Buchanan of Australia has won 75 per cent of matches at all levels, far more than anyone in the history of the game," Morris said.

"We are looking for the best man for the job, someone who can create a positive atmosphere for the team, manage people well, manage coaches well, perhaps coach as well, and I'm confident we will find the right person to do that."

During Buchanan's tenure, the Australian cricket team posted a number of world records including the highest number of consecutive Test wins (16), the longest number of consecutive wins in World Cup (11) and the highest winning percentage in Test and one-day internationals of any coach.

The first Ashes Test starts in Cardiff on July 8.

Miandad off to China

Cricket

INTERNET, undated

Former Pakistan great Javed Miandad will next month tour China as a cricket ambassador to promote the emerging game in the sports-mad Asian giant.

"As part of Pakistan's support plan to promote the game of cricket in China, we have decided to send Miandad to China so that he can explore ways to help lift the game in that country," said a sports ministry official, Ashraf Khan.

President Asif Ali Zardari, who is patron-in-chief of the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB), appointed Miandad as cricket ambassador to China in December.

Miandad, 51, will tour China from March 9 to 15.

"I have high hopes of China competing at a top level very soon because the feedback I have is that they have potential and can excel in the field of cricket, like they did in other sports," Miandad told reporters.

Pakistan has previously provided assistance to China, such as training and coaching facilities, to prepare its national cricket team.

Former Pakistan player Rashid Khan is China's national cricket coach and guided their female team to the semi-final of the Asian Cricket Council (ACC) women's tournament in Malaysia last year.

An affiliate member of the ACC and the International Cricket Council (ICC) since 2004, China won the ICC global development award for the region in 2005.

The Chinese government has made efforts to make cricket a mandatory sport and plans to make China a top-tier team by 2020.

The country is ready to embrace Twenty20 cricket as one of five new sports will debut at the 2010 Asian Games in Guangzhou.

Miandad said he will first assess the facilities.

"I would like to see what infrastructure is there and then make a plan to help them progress," said Miandad, who played 124 Tests for Pakistan.

Miandad last week resigned as PCB director general, protesting over the limited scope of his contract.

Marseille duo in focus

AFP, Paris



Striker Sylvain Wiltord's rebirth and Steve Mandanda's midweek disappointment for France may be on coach Eric Gerets' mind as Marseille focus on Sunday's south coast derby at Monaco.

Goalkeeper Mandanda showed poor positioning when Argentina's Jonas Gutierrez opened the scoring in the 2-0 friendly victory over France at Marseille's Stade Velodrome on Wednesday, and he was less than imperious for Lionel Messi's second.

French league leaders Lyon host Le Havre on Sunday, as they continue their quest to stave off second-placed Bordeaux, who entertain midtable Grenoble on Saturday.

Lyon have 46 points, with Bordeaux and third-placed Paris Saint Germain, who welcome St Etienne to the Parc des Princes in Saturday's late match, on 42, Marseille, in the UEFA Cup spot of fourth, are a point further back on 41.

Marseille will no doubt be looking over their shoulder in their attempt to qualify for Europe with Toulouse, Lille and

Rennes closely challenging within three points of them.

Mandanda's shot-blocking abilities and athleticism however are not always matched by good all round positioning and reliability with Thursday's French sporting press claiming he has still some way to go before he is his country's clear, first-choice keeper.

Meanwhile, Marseille's former Arsenal and France international striker Sylvain Wiltord is, at 34, having a new lease of life at Marseille.

Having signed a new contract in the middle of last month till the end of the season, Gerets has shown faith in the veteran.

Wiltord, once Arsenal's record signing of 13 million pounds in 2001/02, has had success at the highest levels for both club and country.

English Premiership winners medals in 2002 and 2004 with Arsenal followed his Euro

FIXTURES

Saturday	Auxerre v Lille, Bordeaux v Grenoble, Caen v Lorient, Le Mans v Nice, Rennes v Nancy, Valenciennes v Nantes, Paris Saint Germain v St Etienne
Sunday	Lyon v Le Havre, Sochaux v Toulouse, Monaco v Marseille

2000 victory with France though the tail end of his career with Arsenal was less than heroic.

Hailed by the north stand at the Stade Velodrome after Sunday's 1-0 victory over Bordeaux on Sunday, when Sylvain had a solid game and even a goal disallowed, Marseille sporting director Jose Anigo said he had a chance to make his mark.

Anigo told l'Equipe: "We have confidence in him (Wiltord) on a daily basis. Though Eric Gerets has not promised him anything, he has also made it very clear to him he has as good a chance as anyone else of playing."

Meanwhile, Monaco midfielder Jerko Leko is hoping of making his injury return this weekend against Marseille, though he is already looking further ahead in time.

The Croatian international broke his cheekbone at the start of the year in a friendly against Juventus but is hopeful of making the starting 11 for the clash against Marseille.

"It's true that January didn't start well for me with the facial fracture, but I've worked very hard and now I feel like I'm back to my best," said the former Dynamo Zagreb midfielder.

"I hope I get the chance to play against Marseille this weekend."

India recall Balaji Dubai