

Shirin storms to top

SPORTS REPORTER

Sharmin Sultana Shirin maintained her winning streak in the 30th Parachute National Women's Chess Championship yesterday to take solo lead after five rounds.

Shirin defeated Ahely Sarkar at the federation hall-room to extend her tally to maximum five points as previous round's co-leader Shamima Akhter Liza dropped points against WFM Zakia Sultana.

Liza was on 4.5 points, followed by reigning champion IWM Rani Hamid and Masuda Begum on four points.

In other fifth round matches, Rani beat Amena Khatun, Masuda beat Jahanara Haque Runu, Nazrana Khan Eva beat Protiva Talukder and Rokhsana Titli drew with Farjana Hossain Anne.



Abahani players yesterday watch the muzzle of a recoilless rifle placed on the street in front of the club's Dhanmondi tent, which is about a kilometre away from the BDR headquarters that has been rocked by soldiers' mutiny since Wednesday morning.

PHOTO: STAR

Biman flying high

Abahani win, Mohammedan lose

Cricket

SPORTS REPORTER

Biman remained on top of the Premier Cricket League table while defending champions Abahani kept breathing on the leaders' neck after the sixth round but Mohammedan, one of the pre-league favourites and this year's Twenty20 champions, suffered yet another defeat yesterday.

The three matches that were stopped midway through on Wednesday due to the BDR mutiny in the city, finished yesterday with Biman cruising to a six-wicket win over winless City Club, Abahani beating Old DOHS by 27 runs and Surjo Torun inflicting a five-wicket defeat on Mohammedan.

The Cricket Committee of Dhaka Metropolis (CCDM), meanwhile, has decided to put off the league for further two days. Situation permitting, the league will resume on March 1.

BIMAN-CITY

Biman maintained hundred per cent record as a 148-run opening stand between Nazmus Sadat and Zahid Niaz throttled the national airliners to 237 for four at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur.

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Did U Know?

Younis Khan became the third Pakistan player to score a triple century on the fifth day of the first Test on Wednesday, and the first to score a triple century against Sri Lanka.



Frank Lampard

(Chelsea midfielder)
"He's a great man as well as a great manager. I saw that as soon as I met him. He helped me develop from a West Ham player who maybe hadn't seen the real world in footballing terms, and he opened my eyes to things."
On Juventus manager Claudio Ranieri.



Neo Cricket

New Zealand v India
Second Twenty20 Int'l
Live from 12:00pm

TEN Sports

South Africa v Australia
First Test, Day Two
Live from 2:30pm

ESPN

Sportscentre India
Sports News
Live at 8:30pm

ZEE Sports

West Indies v England
Fourth Test, Day Two
Live from 8:00pm

Seven in finals

SPORTS REPORTER

Seven teams -- Satkhira, Chittagong, Bogura, Jhalokathi, Chuadanga, Tangail and Narayanganj -- reached the final round of the Under-13 Football Festival after emerging champions in their respective zones. The finals will be held in Dhaka.

The final of Chapainabganj zone was postponed due to unavoidable reasons.

Following are the results of the day's zonal finals:

Satkhira 1, Bagerhat 0; Chittagong 2, Noakhali 1; Bogura 4, Rangpur 1; Jhalokathi 0, Bogura 0 (Jhalokathi win 3-2 in tiebreakers); Chuadanga 1, Gazipur 1 (Chuadanga win 3-1 in tiebreakers); Tangail 2, Netrokona 0; Narayanganj 8, Sunamganj 0.

Aussies fight back

Cricket

AFP, Johannesburg

Captain Ricky Ponting and Michael Clarke shared a century partnership as Australia fought back after a poor start on the first day of the first Test against South Africa at the Wanderers Stadium here on Thursday.

Australia were 254 for five when bad light stopped play. Ponting (83) and Clarke (68) put on 113 for the fourth wicket with attacking stroke play after Dale Steyn and Morné Morkel reduced them to 38 for three.

Although Ponting and Clarke were out in fairly quick succession, new cap Marcus North (47 not out) and wicketkeeper Brad Haddin (37 not out) put on an unbeaten 72 for the sixth wicket to continue the Australian recovery.

Steyn took three for 82 but it was a disappointing day for the South African bowlers in humid, overcast conditions which favoured swing bowling.

The South Africans were hampered by a back injury to allrounder Jacques Kallis, who bowled only four overs before leaving the field for two hours.

Steyn dismissed both Australian openers cheaply, including new cap Phil Hughes, who was caught behind for a four-ball duck in the first over. Simon Katich fell for three to a diving catch by Neil McKenzie at gully.

Morkel followed up with the wicket of Michael Hussey, who was caught by Kallis at second slip for four.

Australia could have been in deep trouble shortly before lunch but Ponting, on 40, survived a straightforward chance off Steyn to South African counterpart Graeme Smith at first slip. He hooked

the next ball for six.

Ponting also survived the first challenge of an umpiring decision in a match played by either side.

When Ponting was on 70 he was given not out by umpire Billy Bowden when the South Africans thought he had been caught behind off an inside edge.

The home side used one of their potential two unsuccessful challenges but the evidence for television umpire Asad Rauf was inconclusive and Ponting batted on.

Ponting was eventually bowled by a full ball from Makhaya Ntini which swung in so sharply that Ponting did not play a shot at it.

But by then he and vice-captain Clarke had taken the initiative away from South Africa.

Ponting faced 134 balls and hit 11 fours and a six, while Clarke scored his runs off 90 deliveries and hit ten fours before he drove loosely at Steyn and was caught behind.

The left-handed North, **SEE PAGE 18 COL 4**



Australia captain Ricky Ponting pulls one down to midwicket on way to scoring 83 during the first day of the first Test against South Africa at the Wanderers in Johannesburg on Thursday.

PHOTO: AFP

Adios, guests

SPORTS REPORTER

Abahani foreign recruit Yalaka Venugopal Rao who also plays for the Deccan Chargers in the Indian Premier League, has left the city yesterday evening citing safety reasons.

Venugopal, who has over five thousand first-class runs for his state Andhra, boarded a 5.30pm flight to Delhi amidst an uncertain atmosphere in the city.

Another foreign enlist, Sandeep Sharma who is playing for Surjo Torun is also reported to be embarking on a Jet Airways flight to Delhi this morning.

Sharma left his rented flat in Dhanmondi last evening and moved to Dhaka Club. "My parents and family back home have expressed great concern on the situation here, and I am seriously contemplating on going back home and maybe return when things are normal again," said Sandeep, yesterday evening.

LOCAL SNIPPETS

SPORTS REPORTER

Labagh SC and Rahmatganj SC won their respective matches in the Citycell Metropolis 3rd Division Football League at the Bir Shreshtha Shaheed Sepoy Mohammad Mostafa Stadium at Kamalapur yesterday.

In the day's first match, Labagh beat Rahmatganj 1-0 goal with Shumon scoring the lone goal for the victors.

Labagh has bagged 9 points from 6 games, while Rahmatganj remains at one point from their 7 matches.

In the day's other match, Rampura KC defeated Rainbow SC by the same margin, with **SEE PAGE 18 COL 5**

Dhoni wants a fresh start

Second NZ-India T20 today

Cricket

AFP, Wellington

A seven-wicket win in the opening Twenty20 cricket international against India has made a world of difference to New Zealand who go into the second match here Friday with their tails up.

"Hopefully this is the start of something," said captain Daniel Vettori, sounding more confident than when he described India as "a huge challenge" before the start of the series.

"It was a really pleasing win, they put us under pressure and we responded well." But Indian skipper Mahendra Singh Dhoni did not believe the result was a pointer to how the rest of the series would go, with five one-day internationals and three Tests to follow the second Twenty20.

"You can win a game by a big margin and quite convincingly but now it's a fresh start," Dhoni warned.

"We've learned a lot from our mistakes, and we learn quickly."

"I think the New Zealand team knows if we don't make mistakes in the next game they will have to chase a big score."

India's power hitting ability was on display from the start of the first game with Virender Sehwag belting Tim Southee for three consecutive sixes in the opening over.

But Vettori was pleased with the way his bowlers were able to recover and restrict India to 162 for eight and the New Zealand batsmen reeled in the target for the loss of only three wickets and with seven balls to spare.

"I thought it might be the first time I've ever chased 300 in a Twenty20," Vettori joked.

"It was a reasonably daunting start. We knew India have got very good players and it's up to us to back ourselves continually... We have got to be so precise to get through that initial (batting) onslaught."

But the explosive approach of the Indians was also their downfall as they reached 25 without loss in the second over and then imploded to be six for 82 in the 10th.

Dhoni felt a more measured approach after **SEE PAGE 18 COL 3**

Captains slate the pitch

Cricket

AFP, Karachi

Pakistan and Sri Lanka criticised the lifeless wicket prepared for the drawn first Test here, with captains fearing such tracks will turn five-day cricket dull and make bowlers an endangered species.

"Test cricket gets boring if we play on such wickets," Pakistan captain Younus Khan said on Wednesday after the first Test petered out into a draw with 1,553 runs scored for the loss of just 18 wickets.

"People won't come to the stadiums. Two top spinners from Sri Lanka were playing but they did not trouble us and our bowlers struggled as well, there was little to watch for people," he said.

Barely 1,500 people watched the action on five days of the Test -- Pakistan's first in 14 months as team refused to tour the country over security fears.

Sri Lanka rattled 644-7 with captain Mahela Jayawardene (240) and Thilan Samaraweera (231) setting a fourth wicket world record of 437. Pakistan also feasted on a flat National Stadium pitch, compiling their highest Test score of 765-6.

Younis hit an epic 313 and never looked in trouble during his 768-minute stay at the crease.

Sri Lanka had lost five wickets for 144 in their second innings when the match ended.

Younis questioned why such type of a pitch was prepared.

"I think everyone was afraid of defeat. The wicket should be result-oriented so that I can know the strength of the players."

"We have to go to Australia this year. So if you want to see Pakistan's success abroad, then we have to make quality pitches. We have good pitches in domestic matches, so why not in Tests?" Jayawardene said bowlers would not be factor on such unresponsive pitches.

"If you have too many pitches like this in **SEE PAGE 18 COL 2**

BAYERN RUN RIOT

Yossi gives L'pool edge

IHT, London



Yossi Benayoun's late header gave Liverpool a valuable 1-0 win at Real Madrid on Wednesday, while Bayern Munich crushed Sporting Lisbon 5-0 to virtually guarantee a spot in the quarterfinals.

Chelsea, last season's beaten finalists, gained a slim first-leg advantage over Juventus with Didier Drogba ending a two-month goal drought to clinch the 1-0 win at Stamford Bridge.

In the night's only stalemate, Giuseppe Rossi scored from the penalty spot to salvage a 1-1 draw for Villarreal at home to Panathinaikos.

The second legs are on March 10, when nine-time champion Real Madrid will need to win at Anfield to reach the quarterfinals for the first time since 2004.

The first match between Madrid and Liverpool since the English side won the 1981 European Cup final was heading for a draw until Benayoun made a powerful connection with Fabio Aurelio's curling free kick in the 82nd minute to score the all-important away goal.

"We base ourselves on being organized, we're probably one of the most organized teams and that was evident again tonight,"

Liverpool defender Jamie Carragher said. "The away goal's massive in Europe."

Madrid goalkeeper Iker Casillas denied first-half scoring chances for Liverpool striker Fernando Torres and Xabi Alonso, while Arjen Robben created the Spanish champion's best effort with a rising shot that went through the fingertips of goalkeeper Pepe Reina in the 71st minute but flew over the crossbar.

"We knew it could be very difficult, they had a lot of confidence and we needed to work very hard," said Benitez, who is a former assistant coach of Real Madrid.

Guus Hiddink now has two wins from his first two matches as Chelsea's interim manager, following Drogba's fourth goal of the season. Drogba finished from a clever disguised pass through the middle from fellow Ivory Coast striker Salomon Kalou.

With Frank Lampard and John Terry the only players in the Chelsea lineup remaining from his final season at Stamford Bridge in 2003-4, former Blues coach Claudio Ranieri had little inside knowledge to exploit.

And Ranieri's side struggled to cope with Chelsea's speed and was denied the time and space it is accustomed to in Serie A.

Juventus did manage two worthy openings in the first half. Alessandro Del Piero drew a save from goalkeeper Petr Cech with a shot **SEE PAGE 18 COL 5**



Liverpool midfielder Yossi Benayoun (2nd from L) rises to head home a free-kick from Albert Rieira (not in the picture) to put the Reds ahead against Spanish giants Real Madrid during the Champions League first leg of their round of 16 tie at the Santiago Bernabeu on Wednesday. In a stop-start game Benayoun's goal gives the English side the edge going into the home leg in a fortnight.

PHOTO: AFP