

Ash knock goes awry

Cricket

SPORTS REPORTER

Mohammad Ashraf scored a well-composed 78 but the captain's effort was not good enough for Gazi Tank to avoid a four-wicket defeat to Mohammedan in the Premier Division Cricket Super League at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday.

The IPL-bound Bangladesh skipper continued his good form by making his third consecutive half-century as Gazi Tank posted 221 in 49.5 overs after deciding to bat first. Mohammedan rode on an unbeaten 72-run seventh wicket stand between Faisal Hossain and Sohrwardi Shuvo to reach 224-6 in 48.2 overs.

With their first victory in the super league, Mohammedan improved their tally to 15 points while newcomers Gazi Tank remained on 14 from as many matches. Mohammedan also won the first phase match against the Ashraf-led side, by 174 runs.

In reply to a modest target, Mohammedan made a poor start as pacer Rabiul Islam removed openers Nadimuddin (12) and Nasiruddin Faruque (10) with the scoreboard reading 36.

Left-arm spinner Enamul Haque then took the charge by taking two wickets as the popular Motijheel outfit were reduced to 101-5 before Marshall Ayub joined Faisal Hossain to consoli-

date their position by sharing 51 runs for the sixth wicket.

Marshall made 18 off 42 balls while left-handed Faisal was not out on 52 off 74 balls that featured two fours and as many sixes.

Captain Shuvo hit an unbeaten 32 off 44 deliveries that saw one four and a six.

Earlier, new ball bowlers Sajedul Islam and Dollar Mahmud equally shared six wickets to wrap up the Gazi Tank innings for 221 despite Ashraf's cunning knock.

There was, however, chaos during the first innings when umpire SIS Saikat revoked his decision against Ashraf in the initial stage. Ashraf played left-arm spinner Yasin Arafat to deep mid-wicket fence where Sajedul took the catch, lost his balance and during his backward momentum, threw the ball inside the ropes. The umpire raised his finger but Ashraf refused to move from his crease. Later the two umpires declared him not out after a brief discussion.

Anwar Hossain scored second team highest 30 off 63 balls with the help of three boundaries.

BRIEF SCORES

GAZI TANK: 221 all out in 49.5 overs (Imrul 26, Anwar 30, Ashraf 78, Hassan 10, Farid 28, extras 24; Dollar 3-61, Sajedul 3-32)

MOHAMMEDAN: 224-6 in 48.2 overs (Nadim 12, Faruque 10, Shamsur 28, Forhad 36, Marshall 18, Faisal 52 not out, Shuvo 32 not out, extras 28; Rabiul 2-55, Enamul 2-37)

Result: Mohammedan won by four wickets.

Ahad urges to work as a team

SPORTS REPORTER

The government looks set to stage the opening ceremony of the 2011 Cricket World Cup at the Bangabandhu National Stadium, said State Minister for Youth and Sports Ahad Ali Sarkar yesterday after a meeting National Sports Council (NSC), Bangladesh Olympic Association (BOA) and Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) high-ups.

"It is a government decision although it is still in discussions. We believe that holding the opening ceremony of the Cricket World Cup will uphold the country's image to the world," Ahad Ali told in a briefing after the meeting at the NSC Tower.

NSC and BOA boss and Army Chief General Moeen U Ahmed told that his organisations are ready to help the government for whatever it wants.

With football rising again as the country's most popular game under the new leadership of the BFF, many believe the move to bring cricket back to the BNS would damage football's progress.

However, BFF president Kazi Salahuddin told reporters that his federation is ready to help this cause for the sake of the country even if they have to go through some sufferings.

Earlier in the meeting, where BOA secretary

Kutubuddin Ahmed was also present, the country's sports bosses tried to convince Salahuddin that 'football would not be damaged' in preparation for the World Cup opening.

It was learned that the sports minister commented that football and cricket are both popular games and under the leadership of Salahuddin, everyone hopes that football will reach the top level.

General Moeen, BOA and the NSC also made presentations to the minister of their recent works and progress.

"We have been trying to free sports of politics," Gen Moeen said adding that all the sports bodies now look forward to a guideline from the minister for further development.

Gen Moeen also said that Bangladesh eye ten more gold medals at the coming South Asian Games (SAG) to be held in Dhaka next year.

The minister requested the concerned bodies to take steps to increase food allowance of the SAG trainees and also provide them better accommodation. He also asked them to build modern facilities at the Bangabandhu National Stadium as facilities of the venue are substandard compared to international benchmark.

SEE PAGE 18 COL 5



Bangladesh's Amol Roy in action against Jordan's Ahmed Al-Hadid during their Davis Cup Asia/Oceania Zone Group-IV match at the National Tennis Complex in Ramna yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

DAVIS CUP

Hosts triumph over Jordan

Tennis

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh won their first match against Jordan 2-1 in the Davis Cup Asia/Oceania Zone Group-IV at the National Tennis Complex in Ramna yesterday.

In a best of three contest, Amol Roy and Shibu Lal won their singles matches against Jordan's Ahmad Al-Hadid 7-6 (0), 6-1 and Khalid Naffa 6-4, 7-6 (2) respectively. In the doubles Jordan's Fabio Badra and Tareq Talal Shkakwa beat Bangladesh's Ranjan Ram and Omar Farouk Sunny.

Shibu Lal has played 30 matches in the Davis Cup and won 22 while Amol Roy has played 19 matches with 16 wins so far.

Bangladesh coach PK Ghosh said that tennis in the country needs consistent sponsors for players to win at the international level.

"Sponsors do come in the game when there are tournaments like this but I would like to see sponsors in the off season so that we can fund the training programmes and provide better practice facilities to our players," said Ghosh while discussing the day's results in Group B.

Bangladesh will meet Turkmenistan today in their second match at the same venue.

Ten nations split into two groups are taking part in this prestigious event. UAE, Vietnam, Bahrain, Yemen and Iraq are in Group A while hosts Bangladesh, Qatar, Myanmar, Jordan and Turkmenistan make Group B.

In other matches, Vietnam's Ngo Quang Huy and Bui Tri Nguyen beat Bahrain's Khaled Al-Thawadi 6-2, 6-2 in identical sets and Abdulla Mohammed 6-2, 6-0 respectively in their singles matches.

Vietnam also won the doubles against rivals Bahrain as the Quoc Khanh and Tran Thah Hoang beat Abdulla Mohamed and Khaled Al-Thawadi.

Qatar triumphed over Myanmar 2-1 as Qatar's Abdulla Al-Haji beat Min Min in identical sets 6-2, 6-2 and Sultan Khalfan Al-Alawi defeated Burmese Maung Nge Hnuang 6-7, 6-1. Myanmar won their only point when Maung Nge Hnuang and

SEE PAGE 18 COL 1

Bata wins clothing rights

SPORTS REPORTER

Bata Shoe Company won the official clothing sponsorship rights of different cricket teams and will sign an agreement with Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) today.

Bata won the rights for national men's and women's teams, A Team, Academy team and the Under 19 team.

It was refreshing news for the present board when even the country's most coveted domestic competition, Premier Division Cricket

SEE PAGE 18 COL 5

South win Korean derby

AFP, Seoul



South Korea substitute Kim Chi-Woo scored a last-gasp winner as hosts edged North Korea 1-0 in their politically-charged World Cup qualifier on Wednesday.

Kim shattered their northern neighbour's dreams with a curling, left-foot freekick in the 88th minute that deflected off North Korea's Hong Yong-Jo and into the net, ending a run of five draws between the arch enemies.

It lifted South Korea onto the top of Asian Group B with 11 points from five matches. The North, having played six games, remain on 10 points, three ahead of Saudi Arabia and four in front of Iran.

"I'm really happy to have scored at a crucial moment," said Kim, who came on with 12 minutes left.

"North Korea were a lot tougher than in the past. But after this hard-fought win, I am sure we'll be off and running from here."

The match, only the second FIFA-sanctioned inter-Korean showdown in Seoul, was staged amid rising tensions on the Korean peninsula.

North Korea is preparing to launch what they claim is a communications satellite between April 4-8, while South Korea, along with the United States and Japan, believe it is a cover for a ballistic missile test.

Against this backdrop, hundreds of fans each held up small South Korean flags during the national anthem, an unusual display at sporting

events here, while the partisan 48,000-strong crowd booted North Korea's every touch.

It was the North who started stronger with Hong Yong-Jo pouncing on a loose ball just outside the box early on and forcing South Korea 'keeper Lee Woon-Jae to make a diving save to his right.

But for the rest of the half it

was all South Korea, who were repeatedly frustrated by the stifling North Korean defence.

The North crowded their box with as many as six players, and in midfield, defenders constantly pressured the South Korean ball carriers.

In the 13th minute, Ki Sung-Yueng's curling freekick

SEE PAGE 18 COL 2



South Korea supersub Kim Chi-Woo celebrates after scoring a last-gasp winner against North Korea during their 2010 World Cup qualifier in Seoul on Wednesday.

PHOTO: AFP

Mash leaves today

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh vice captain Mashrafe Bin Mortaza will leave Dhaka for Kolkata this evening to join his Indian Premier League (IPL) side Kolkata Knight Riders (KKR).

The Bangladesh pace spearhead has informed that he will be flying out to India's showbiz capital Mumbai later tonight from Kolkata to shoot a commercial for Pepsi.

Mashrafe, who was bided in the auctions for six million dollars at Goa in February this year, will join the likes of Sourav Ganguly, Murali Karthik, Ajit Agarkar, Australian Brad Hodge and South African Charl Langeveldt in the KKR camp. Other prominent international players like Ishant Sharma, Brendon McCullum, Chris Gayle, Ricky Ponting and David Hussey are currently on international duty with the national teams and are expected to join the camp at a later date.

The Knight Riders, who are co-owned by Bollywood superstar Shahrukh Khan, finished sixth last year in the first edition of the IPL and they have already made a doubtful start to their season as coach John Buchanan has announced a multi-captain strategy for the team, which have had their fair share of criticism.

Experts have been quoted saying it is a plan to slowly ease out Ganguly off the captaincy as he is 40 and hardly plays any form of competitive cricket other than the IPL once a year.

Mashrafe will add to the all-round base of the Knight Riders as he is in red-hot form with bat and his off-spin, which he has been bowling to

SEE PAGE 18 COL 1

India's toughest test

Cricket

CRICINFO, Wellington

If one of the challenges of Test cricket is playing in various conditions, then any team aspiring to be the best team in the world should visit the Basin Reserve in the first week of April.

Located beneath Mount Victoria and Mount Cook in windy Wellington, the Basin Reserve is totally uncovered. Most of the seating is in the grass banks, and the few stands that exist are not high at all. With winter approaching and the Southerlies blowing with gusto, the players will definitely feel the need to protect against the cold. Wellington in early April is New Zealand's equivalent of a dry and dusty Ahmedabad in October. Thank goodness some things like the weather can't be tailored, or else, going by the trend of homogenous pitches, the sameness would have completely taken over.

To the disappointment of many, India have largely played in conditions similar to those at home so far on the tour. Admittedly, Christchurch was cold but the flat pitch at the AMI Stadium didn't test them much. India struggled on a nippy pitch in Auckland but the

one-day series had already been won by then. In Hamilton and Napier, the Indians found even the weather to their liking -- it was warm and sunny. And the less said about the pitch at McLean Park the better.

The Indians arrived in Wellington with a 1-0 lead in the series and, when they reached the Basin Reserve two days before the third Test that starts on Friday, the skies were overcast, the temperature was about 10 degrees Celsius, and winds were blowing around 30kmph. That's one-third of the speed of a Harbhajan Singh quicker one and about 23 per cent of the normal pace of the fast bowlers. Thursday and Friday are expected to be sunnier, but the forecast for the weekend -- the second and third days of the Test -- is cloudy.

The Indian team trained for three hours on Wednesday, but not many shed their jackets, gloves and beanies. VVS Laxman wore a thick jacket, while Virender Sehwag had a sleeveless sweater. One of the players said it was even colder than their last visit to New Zealand in 2002-03, while another said he had encountered similar conditions in England. Another member of the team said that the cold was manageable but the winds presented a challenge.

SEE PAGE 18 COL 6



NEED A BIG ONE: India opener Virender Sehwag (L) and Rahul Dravid bat in the nets during a practice session at the Basin Reserve in Wellington yesterday. Sehwag will be looking for a handsome score in the third and final Test starting here on Friday. In the first two matches he managed only 24, 34 and 22.

PHOTO: AFP

BCB hands over Tk 5 lakh to Rana's family

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) handed over a Tk 5-lakh cheque to the family of late Bangladesh all-rounder Manzarul Islam Rana at his residence in Khulna yesterday.

The board handed over the entire proceeds from ticket sales of the opening match of Grameenphone tri-nation cup between Bangladesh and Zimbabwe as they had declared the ODI held on January 10 this year as a benefit match for the all-rounder.

Rana died in a tragic road accident in Khulna on March 16 in 2007.

On behalf of the board, BCB directors Syed Zahid Hossain,

SEE PAGE 18 COL 1

KP 'fully committed'

Cricket

AFP, London

Kevin Pietersen has said he remains fully committed to playing overseas for England despite making public his unhappiness at being separated from his wife, the singer Jessica Taylor.

The South Africa born batsman was much criticised after admitting in an interview last week that he was at the end of his tether.

However, the gifted shotmaker said that remark was as much a reflection of how England had failed to win a game under his leadership in India and, up until the interview, had won just one match in the Caribbean -- and that was only because West Indies coach John Dyson had handed them victory after misinterpreting the Duckworth/Lewis rule.

Hampshire batsman Pietersen's commitment was again questioned when he withdrew during Sunday's nine-wicket win over the West Indies in Barbados with a back spasm that threatens his availability for Friday's one-day series decider in St Lucia.

"I've never said I want to miss a tour and

there's no way I will ever miss a tour," Pietersen told the BBC on Tuesday. "I love touring."

"But there's no way I'll be without my wife for 11 weeks again."

The 28-year-old added: "The first half of the winter was a shambles under my leadership. We didn't come close to winning a game in India and we didn't come close to winning a game here before we won on Sunday -- except for the mathematical error on the West Indies' part in Guyana."

"The comments were born from the frustration of that. We all want to go home, but it does not stop the commitment we all put in on a daily basis," said Pietersen, whom some have accused of being more interested in money, given that he signed a contract to play in the Indian Premier League with the Bangalore Royal Challengers, than the welfare of the England team.

"I am absolutely 100 per cent passionate about playing for England. I absolutely never take it for granted about wearing the three lions on my chest," Pietersen, England's leading batsman in recent years, insisted.

"The second part of the frustration was I

SEE PAGE 18 COL 5



Did U Know?

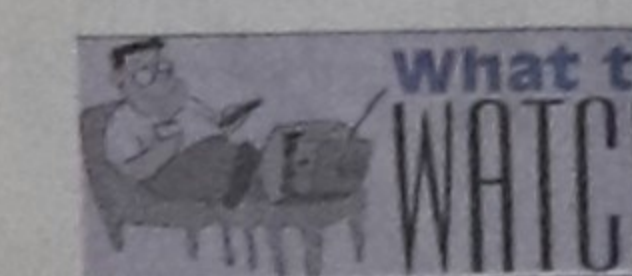
Miniature golf was originally called Tom Thumb Golf.



Glenn McGrath

(Legendary Australian pace man)

"I'm just Jane McGrath's husband these days." Reflecting on how his work with the foundation named after his late wife has taken over his life.



ESPN

Sportscenter India Sports News Live at 8:30pm

Neo Cricket

New Zealand v India Third Test, Day One Live from 4:00am (Friday)