



Did U Know?

Water polo was first played in the USA in 1888. It featured the old rugby style of play which looked like American football in the water.



What to WATCH

TEN Sports

South Africa v Australia
Fourth ODI
Live from 2:00pm
ESPN
Sportscentre India
Sports News
Live at 8:30pm



Talk TURKEY



Sachin Tendulkar

(Indian batting superstar)
"A lot of credit has to go to coach Gary Kirsten who has allowed the natural instincts of players to flourish. A lot has to do with what's going on in a player's mind and Gary has played a huge role there."
While praising the team coach after winning their first Test series in New Zealand for more than 41 years.

DCA start off with big win

SPORTS REPORTER

Dhanmondi Cricket Academy (DCA) rode on Sujun's devastating 40-ball 72 to rout Young Cricketers by 117 runs in the Second Division Cricket League at the Dhaka University ground yesterday.

Batting first, DCA made 274 in 47.1 overs with Nazrul contributing 35 late in the innings. Kamal and Helal took two wickets each for the Mirpur-based club.

DCA later bowled out Young Cricketers for only 157 runs in 28.2 overs with Shama taking three wickets and two each from Mohsin and Mahfuz.

At the City Club ground, Green Leaf (234 all out) defeated Talent Hunt Cricket Academy (196 all out) by 38 runs with Arpon slamming 85 for the winners.

Dhaka Mariners, Udaychal, Mirpur Cricket Club and Kathalagan also won their respective matches.

Waqar doubts rebels' loyalty

AP, Islamabad

Former pace great Waqar Younis has questioned the national commitment of those Pakistan players who are competing in the unauthorised Indian Cricket League.

The future of ICL players will come up for discussion when the International Cricket Council's (ICC) executive board meets in Dubai on April 17-18.

Currently all ICL players are ineligible for their national teams, as the ICL Twenty20 competition runs in opposition to the officially recognised Indian Premier League.

Those Pakistan players in the ICL have been critical of the international ban, but Waqar said they should have put their country ahead of the ICL.

"I am a strong believer that a cricketer should be permitted to play anywhere, but in this (ICL) case I think someone where there is a doubt," Younis told reporters in the eastern

Bashundhara surprise

Football

SPORTS REPORTER

Everyone was in for a big surprise at yesterday's press conference at the Kurmitola Golf Club (KGC), organised by the Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) to confirm a deal worth Tk 4.5 crore with Bashundhara Group.

The amount for three years for the district leagues itself is a handsome deal but when Bashundhara announced that it would also provide two grounds for the BFF worth Tk 200 crore, it turned out to be an astonishing news for a federation that was struggling for survival just a year ago.

The BFF and Bashundhara signed a MoU under which the BFF would get Tk 1.5 crore per year for the development of football at district levels in order to revitalise the game from its grassroots. The agreement will be signed within a few days.

Bashundhara chairman Ahmed Akbar Sobhan and BFF president Kazi Salahuddin signed on behalf of their organisations at the venue.

"I have completely forgotten the monetary part of the contract when I heard that we will be getting two new grounds. It's truly amazing and nothing can be a bigger contribution to sport than this. We will try and make one into a mini stadium with a capacity of 15,000 and the other

ground into an academy training ground where there will be some living arrangements for players to stay temporarily," said Salahuddin.

Bashundhara, one of the largest entrepreneurial groups of the country, wants to develop football from its very root and this was the primary reason behind their initiative.

"I remember when we were growing up, we used to stand in long queues to watch players like Salahuddin play, but I do not see that nowadays which is very disheartening.

Therefore, I think it is my duty to do something for the game and I strongly believe that football is under the right leadership in Bangladesh," said Sobhan.

The BFF chief was grateful to the corporate giants and discussed the increased need for laying a solid foundation for football in the country.

"When we form the national team, we want players from all corners of the country and to do that we need to spread the sport to all districts, unions and upazilas. This contract will enable us to do exactly that and in the long run we will see that players are coming from all parts of the nation," said Salahuddin while describing the bondage.

Out of the two pieces of land that Bashundhara will provide, one will be in the Bashundhara residential area near Baridhara while the other is on the southern side of River Buringanga (Riverview project).

SEE PAGE 18 COL 2



Bashundhara Group chairman Ahmed Akbar Sobhan (2nd from L) exchanges files with BFF president Kazi Salahuddin as NSC chairman and Army Chief Gen Moeen U Ahmed (C), BFF senior vice-president Abdus Salam Murshedi (R) and BFF member Golam Rabbani Helal (L) look on at the Kurmitola Golf Club yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

Moeen clears rumours

SPORTS REPORTER

Chief of Army Staff and National Sports Council (NSC) chairman General Moeen U Ahmed said that the Bangabandhu National Stadium (BNS) has been solely allotted to the Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) for training and matches.

Gen Moeen said this during a MoU signing ceremony between BFF and Bashundhara Group at the Kurmitola Golf yesterday.

"Let me make it absolutely clear that the BNS has been given only to the BFF for practice and match usage although we may use it for hosting opening ceremonies of some special events, like the upcoming Cricket World Cup," said Moeen, who is also the president of Bangladesh Olympic Association.

Moeen hinted that just as the BNS can be used for other special events, the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium, which has been assigned to cricket only could also be used to host a football spectacle if the need arises.

He also remarked about NSC's budget mismanagement prior to his appointment.

"When I took over, only 5 percent of the NSC's budget was used to buy sports equipment and now I have brought that up to 28 percent. It's a pretty simple equation, if you are not going to invest in your country's sports then you cannot bring out good sportsmen and your standards will never improve."

Buck gets his own back on Gavaskar

PTI, Bloemfontein

Former Australian coach John Buchanan on Sunday hit back at Sunil Gavaskar for taking a dig at his modest playing career and questioning his success as coach, saying his similarities with ex-captain Steve Waugh took the team to dizzy heights.

"There were always people who were more than willing to put the knife in, and the fact that I never played Test cricket was simmering in the background of these digs, particularly by a select few," Buchanan was quoted as saying by the Times.

"I never shook the feeling that the axe was always hovering," he added.

Buchanan, who is now the Kolkata Knight Riders Cricket Manager, last week drew strong criticism from Gavaskar, who described the Australian "failed former cricketer making a living telling international players to do what he couldn't do."

"Steve Waugh and I were similar in some regards and this helped Australian cricket to reach the heights it has. We both challenged the existing parameters and norms, and created a vision of life education outside the dressing room," Buchanan said recalling Australia's dream run during his tenure as the coach.

PCL from April 29

Cricket

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Chittagong

With the much-needed final nod from Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) the sports organisers of Chittagong has gladly taken the challenge to launch Bangladesh version of Twenty20 cricket styled PCL (Port city Cricket League).

The BCB's board of directors approved the tournament in a meeting on Saturday and has decided to extend all out cooperation to the Port City League (PCL) and set proposed start date of the tournament is April 29.

The tournament will be held at the MA Aziz Stadium but BCB has concern about whether the floodlight is okay to hold the Twenty20 meet.

"Considering insufficient flood lights, the BCB will ask NSC (National Sports Council) to send an engineer to examine the pros and cons

of the stadium by next week," said Ali Abbas, vice-president of Chittagong Divisional Kira Sangstha (CDKS), yesterday.

Taking inspiration from two popular Indian events IPL and ICL, the organisers of CDKS last month had initiated the country's first-ever Twenty20 league.

A five-member delegation of the CDKS led by PCL organising committee chairman AZM Nasiruddin, also president of Chittagong Brothers Union club, went to Dhaka yesterday to bid thanks and gratitude to the BCB for giving them permission to hold the tournament.

They also held a brief meeting with the BCB senior vice-president Mahbul Anam and director and tournament committee chairman Gazi Ashraf Hossain and discussed different aspects of PCL.

In the meeting, BCB offered a 12-day slot from April 29 to May 10 to the PCL organisers, and gave them lists of probable players, per

SEE PAGE 18 COL 4

Series win will be a big boost: Akhtar

Cricket

CRICINFO, undated

Pakistan fast bowler Shoaib Akhtar believes beating Australia in the limited-overs series in the UAE would help send a strong message to other nations to tour Pakistan. "If we beat Australia we can send a strong message that we are a good side and they should come (to Pakistan) and play against us more often," Akhtar said.

Australia will be taking on Pakistan in five ODIs and a Twenty20 international to be played in Abu Dhabi and Dubai from April 22-May 7. A neutral venue was decided on because Australia had declined to tour Pakistan on security grounds, even before the terror attack on the Sri Lanka team last month in Lahore.

"I know whatever happened (in Lahore) was not good for Pakistan," Akhtar said. "(But) this coming series is a good opportunity for us to beat a strong team like Australia, which may help us in inviting strong teams to Pakistan and take our country out of isolation."

Akhtar, 33, passed a three-day fitness test last week before he was selected in a 15-man

SEE PAGE 18 COL 2



PHOTO: AFP

Pakistan speedster Shoaib Akhtar bursts into bowl during a practice session at the Gaddafi Stadium in Lahore yesterday. Pakistan will play Australia in five one-day internationals and one Twenty20 in UAE from April 22.

Warne will miss them

AFP, Cape Town



Shane Warne admits his Rajasthan Royals team have suffered a big blow with the absence of Shane Watson and Sohail Tanvir, two of the stars of the underdog franchise that won the first Indian Premier League (IPL).

Australian all-rounder Watson was player of the tournament last year, while Pakistan left-arm fast bowler Tanvir claimed the purple cap for being leading wicket-taker.

Watson, recently recovered from a long-term injury, joined the Royals for their training camp in Cape Town, but flies out with the Australian team next week for a one-day series against Pakistan in Dubai and Abu Dhabi.

Tanvir will miss the whole tournament after the IPL cancelled the contracts of Pakistan players because of political tension between India and Pakistan.

"They're big losses," said captain-coach Warne. "I think Shane misses the first nine

games playing for Australia so he'll be available for the last five games and hopefully the finals.

"He's not bowling at the moment but he's still a big loss. Tanvir was sensational last year, taking early wickets and bowling at the end."

The loss is complicated by IPL rules which restrict teams to fielding a maximum of four non-Indian players, with Warne and South African captain Graeme Smith likely to fill two of those places.

Warne said England's Dimitri Mascarenhas and South African Twenty20 specialist Tyron Henderson could be competing to fill the Watson role, while South African Test bowler Morkel and Australian Shane Harwood are competing as strike bowlers.

There are also some Indian contenders, including Kamran Khan, 18, a raw left-arm rookie from Uttar Pradesh who bowls with a sly action at surprising pace.

"He's a tiny little guy but he bowls 140 plus. He's very raw but he could be a bit of a bolter," said Warne.

SEE PAGE 18 COL 5

BFF ready for nat'l school, club meets

Football

SPORTS REPORTER

A total of 100 schools will participate in the National School Football Championship, which will kick off on May 2 across the country.

Although the Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) had invited the champions and runners-up of the 64 district school competitions for the first ever national meet, only 51 districts have responded to the call.

The BFF, which will organise the tournament with financial help of the federation's 'partner in progress' Citycell, is trying to give the teams as many matches as possible, informed chief coordinator Fazlur Rahman Babul yesterday.

"The preliminary rounds, however will be on knockout basis because we can't afford to go with a league format for 100 teams," said Babul, also a member of the BFF.

The federation has allotted a budget of Tk 44 lakh for the championship. Eight venues -- Natore, Khulna, Rajbari, Rangamati, Srimongol, Nilphamari, Tangail and Patuakhali -- will host the qualifying rounds while the two top teams from each venue will join the finals where the 16 teams will be split into two groups for a round robin format.

"This way, most of the teams will get a number of matches. One school will get Tk 5,000 per match and the hosts will get Tk 30,000. We are hoping to complete the event in less than a month," Babul added.

"The district football associations will provide accommodation and we are trying to make it as decent as we can. The fixture has already been finalised and player registrations would be done by April 25," he said adding that a footballer must be a student of his school for at least two years to be eligible to play.

The BFF will send scouts to pick up talented players for long-term training, he informed.

SEE PAGE 18 COL 4

SA go for the series

Cricket

CRICINFO, undated

Two more matches and a long and fascinating summer that has been played out between South Africa and Australia will be at an end. One more victory and South Africa will finish on a high. They took a 2-1 lead in Cape Town on Thursday and can wrap up the ODI series with a win in Port Elizabeth today.

However, after such an evenly-fought few months it might be fitting to be locked at 2-2 heading to the final match at the Wanderers, where the two sides rewrote the limited-overs record books with the 438 match three years ago.

But first things first: Australia must win the day game in Port Elizabeth to keep alive their

hopes of a series win and of regaining the No. 1 ODI ranking that began a couple of weeks ago in South African hands and has alternated through the series. After Australia's batsmen failed in Centurion and their bowlers struggled to do a containing job at Newlands, they need to find a satisfying balance in Port Elizabeth. Specifically, they need to find a fast bowler who can adequately support Mitchell Johnson and their top order must not again leave all the work up to the young No. 6 Callum Ferguson.

AB de Villiers has been a thorn in Australia's side right through the summer, since the first Test in Perth, and nothing has changed in the shorter format. South Africa's leading scorer so far this series, de Villiers made a composed 80 in the victory in Cape Town. In the one-day arena he has been aiming for a consolidation

SEE PAGE 18 COL 2

Mirka, Roger tie the knot

AFP, Paris

Men's world number two Roger Federer on Saturday married his fiancée Mirka Vavrinc in his home town of Basel, Switzerland, he announced on his website.

Last month, Federer had revealed on www.rogerfederer.com that Vavrinc, a former top 100-player whom he met in Sydney in 2000, was expecting the couple's first child this summer.

Federer will next week take part after all in the opening clay court tournament of the season, the Monte Carlo Masters, having originally planned to play less in claycourt competition in 2009 than in past years even though the French Open remains the only Grand Slam title in the Australian Open final.

Federer, 27, is struggling to wrest top spot back from Spaniard Rafael Nadal, who denied him a record-equalling 14th Grand Slam title in the Australian Open final.

Last year, the Malorian ended Federer's five-year hold on the Wimbledon trophy and then also deposited him as world number one.



PHOTO: FILE

Tennis superstar Roger Federer of Switzerland and his girlfriend Mirka Vavrinc. The two got married in a private ceremony in Basel on Saturday.