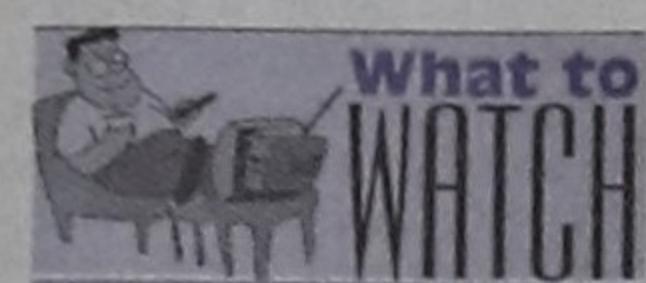




Did U Know?

West Ham defender Alvin Martin scored a hat-trick against three different goalkeepers in the 8-1 win over Newcastle in 1986.



What to WATCH

ESPN
Sportscentre India
Sports News
Live at 8:30pm
ZEE Sports
UEFA Cup
(Quarterfinals, 2nd Leg)
Dinamo Kiev v PSG
Live from 10:30pm
Udinese v Werder Bremen
Live from 12:30am (Friday)



Booters off to Nepal

Football

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh football team will leave for Kathmandu today to play a practice match against Nepal Police on April 18.

The Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) has announced a 20-member squad for the tour, which has been arranged as part of the build up for the AFC Challenge Cup qualifiers that begins in Dhaka on April 26.

Brazilian coach Edson Silva Dido picked up the squad from a preliminary list of 25. And out of the five not touring to the Himalayan Kingdom are prolific strikers Emily and Robin and winger Zahid, who have been left behind to nurse their injuries. Goalkeeper Himel has been asked to stay back and Brothers defender Ariful was dropped due to a lack of progress in his performance.

CHALLENGE CUP FIXTURE

April 26:	Myanmar vs. Macao	3.30pm
	Cambodia vs. Bangladesh	6.00pm
April 28:	Macao vs. Cambodia	3.30 pm
	Bangladesh vs. Myanmar	6.00pm
April 30:	Myanmar vs. Cambodia	3.30pm
	Bangladesh vs. Macao	6.00pm

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The absence of Emily and Robin would make the Bangladesh attack susceptible. But it will give the new striking pair of Mithun Chowdhury and Enamul Haq a chance to show their abilities.

Prior to the departure of the team, coach Dido said that even though the training camp for the Challenge Cup started four weeks ago, his boys have yet to make any noticeable progress.

"Four weeks of training is not enough for a national side when you want to change things completely and therefore we have not made any significant progress, but the players have started realising what I want from them now," said the Brazilian.

Dido also emphasised on the importance of playing a tour match as compared to a local match ahead of a tough international fixture.

"I preferred playing a tour match to a local match because the psychological pressures are different when you are travelling and playing. If you lose a match at home it has a pretty bad effect on the players and fans so it was better for us to play abroad," he said.

The booters will play the match against the police outfit after having just one day of practice in the Nepalese capital, which is situated at 4383 ft above the sea level and it seemed coach Dido was a bit apprehensive about the altitude.

"I don't know much about the opponents and I can't tell you whether we are going to win

DCA make it two in a row

SPORTS REPORTER

A fighting unbeaten 64 from Mahfuz took Dhamondi Cricket Academy (DCA) to victory by two wickets against Rayer Bazar in an exciting encounter of the Second Division Cricket League at the Fatullah Cricket Stadium yesterday.

Rayer Bazar batted first after winning the toss and made 243 in 44.5 overs. Imran struck 79 off 68 balls while Abul added 23. Mohsin took three for 47 while there were two wickets for Rezaul.

DCA lost early wickets but Sujon stay put, hitting 66 but it was Mahfuz who took the Dhamondi side home with an over in hand. Sohel took three wickets for Rayer Bazar.

But the day's hero was clearly Young Cricketers' (BCB) source, the Discovery

Bloodshed in cricket

SPORTS REPORTER

In another shameful episode in the country's cricket, a local coach punched an umpire during an age-level match in the city yesterday.

The coach stomped into the field and started an argument with the umpire. Suddenly, Shaju threw his fist at the umpire who suffered a bleeding nose and fell to the ground.

The umpires have already reported the incident to the board, which could ban the coach for a minimum of one year.

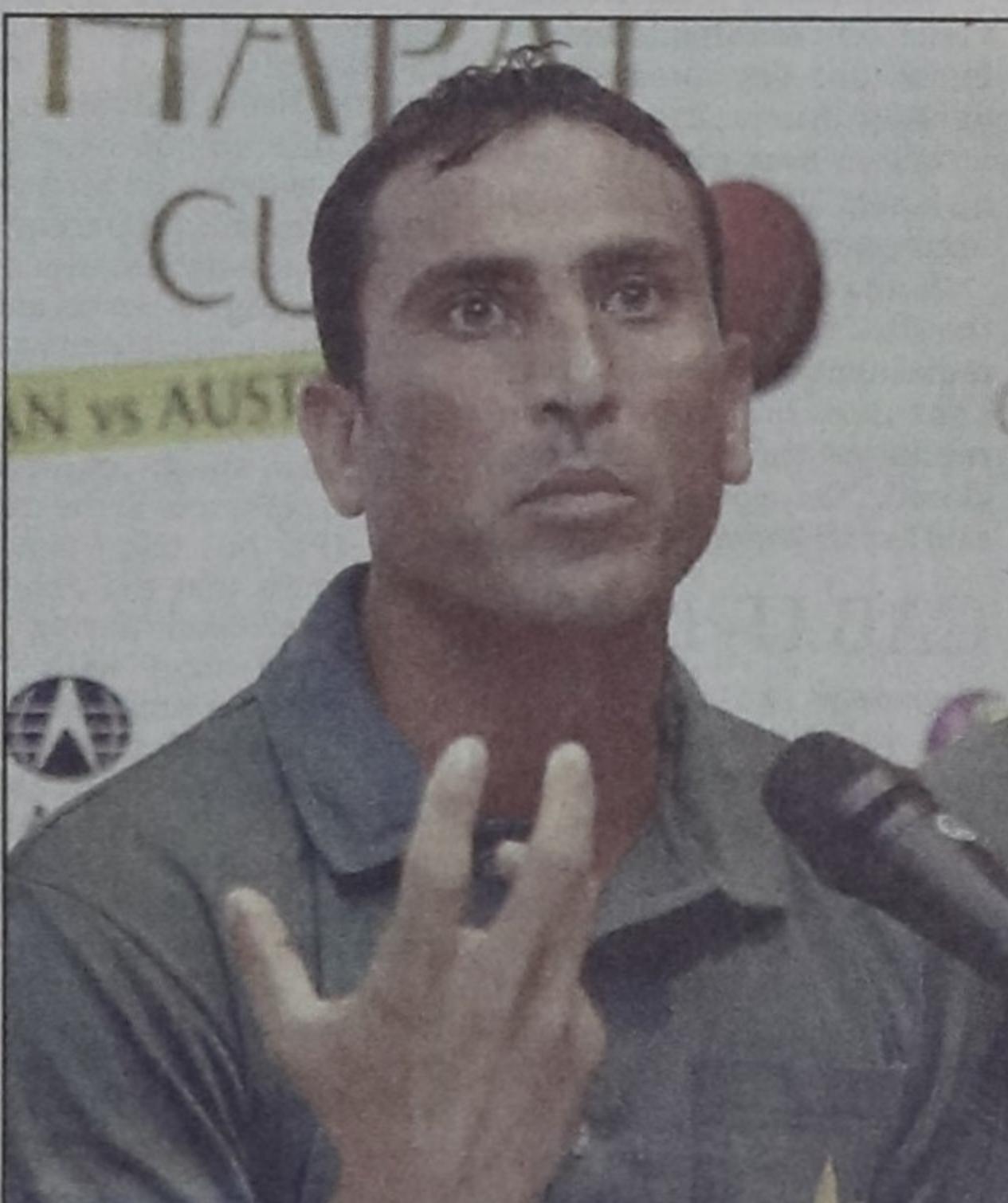
This is not the first time that such clashes have occurred on the cricket field this season. First it was the Bangladesh Boys official Ziaur Rahim Topu who abused the umpires at the City Club ground back in February during a First Division game.

He was subsequently fined Tk 20,000 and suspended for three matches. Then it was the Discovery

assault took place at the Mohakali T&T ground during a Standard Chartered Bank Under-16 National Cricket Championship match between Discovery Cricket Academy and Jubo Kishore Cricket Academy.

During the match's second innings, Discovery coach Shahjahan Shaju reportedly went inside the ground to umpire Alamgir Siddiqui following a dispute over the use of a 12th man. According to a Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) source, the Discovery

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Pakistan captain Younis Khan speaks during a press conference at the Dubai Sports City Cricket Stadium on Tuesday ahead of the five one-day internationals and Twenty20 series against Australia which starts from April 22 in UAE.

SEE PAGE 18 COL 2



Chelsea star Frank Lampard (R) celebrates scoring his second goal to make it 4-4 against Liverpool during their Champions League quarterfinal second-leg match at Stamford Bridge on Tuesday.

PHOTO: AFP

Nimbus accepts it

SPORTS REPORTER

The Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) on Wednesday convinced the visiting Nimbus official about the outstanding dues that he denied during the break of the marathon meeting.

The board claimed that it had pending dues of a staggering 5.3 million dollars to Nimbus until March this year. But Nimbus vice-president Yannick Colaco dismissed the claim while talking to the reporters during the break of the meeting at Hotel Sheraton yesterday. However, at the end of the meeting, which concluded with a pledge of finding new avenues to raise the revenue, BCB's media committee chairman Jalal Yunus said that the financial ledger has buried any misunderstanding between the two parties.

"It's true they paid the minimum guaranteed money but they were also supposed to pay our share of the profit above the minimum guarantee clause. We showed the accounts to him (Yannick) and he could understand our points and said that it will be solved," said Yunus after the meeting.

Under the deal, BCB and Nimbus will share 80 and 20 percent of the earnings, respectively, when returns exceed the tendered (agreed) amount.

"We had talked about a number of issues mostly regarding the audit and accounts and we pointed out many things

SEE PAGE 18 COL 1

CCDM Cup called off

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) have postponed their proposed CCDM Cup tournament.

"We have decided to postpone the tournament as the participating clubs showed their unwillingness to play the tournament in a concise form. Two clubs already regretted their participations but the remaining clubs wants to play in full force," said GS Hasan Tamim, chairman of the Cricket Committee of Dhaka Metropolis (CCDM).

BCB had approved the tournament in its meeting on April 11 in a concise form after Abahani and Surjor Torun pulled out their participations.

BCB was desperate to arrange this tournament as it is in the calendar as they didn't want to break it.

CAB U-15 arrive today

SPORTS REPORTER

The Cricket Association of Bengal (CAB) under-15 team will tour the country from April 16.

During the tour the visitors will play three one-day matches and three two-dayers against Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) Under-15 Game Development Squad.

TEAMS

BCB GAME DEVELOPMENT: Shahriar Islam (captain), Yasir

SEE PAGE 18 COL 5

Blues survive a thriller Face Barcelona in semifinals

AFP, London



Chelsea survived one of the most dramatic matches in Champions League history to reach the semifinals with a 4-4 draw against Liverpool in Tuesday's quarterfinal second leg for a 7-5 aggregate victory.

Guus Hiddink's side, who will face Barcelona in the last four, came agonisingly close to squandering their 3-1 first leg lead as Liverpool twice pulled within one goal of a remarkable victory at Stamford Bridge.

The great escape looked on when Fabio Aurelio's freekick and a Xabi Alonso penalty put Liverpool two goals ahead by half-time.

Chelsea staged a superb second half revival as an own goal by Jose Reina was followed by strikes from Alex and Frank Lampard to seemingly put the Blues in control.

But Liverpool had no intention of going out quietly and Lucas and Dirk Kuyt struck to set up a nerve-jangling finish. If the Reds scored again they would go through on away goals, but Lampard finally settled the tie with a minute to play.

For the second successive season, Chelsea have knocked their Premier League rivals out of Europe's elite club competition, but the nerves of every Chelsea player and fan inside Stamford Bridge must have been completely shredded before the Blues finally emerged victorious.

Liverpool, who were without injured captain Steven Gerrard, needed the kind of heroic display they produced to turn a three-goal deficit into Champions League final victory against AC Milan in 2005.

They started as if inspired by the spirit of Istanbul and Fernando Torres surged onto Yossi Benayoun's backheel, only to lose his composure and scuff tamely wide.

The Blues were wary of committing too many players forward and Liverpool, dominating possession as a result, took the lead in

remarkable fashion after 19 minutes.

There was no apparent danger when Aurelio lined up a freekick wide on the wing 35 yards from goal. But Peter Cech clearly expected the Brazilian to send in a cross and put just one man in the defensive wall before taking up a position on the far side of his goal.

Aurelio noticed the gaping hole at Cech's near-post and took full advantage with a cheeky low shot that left the Chelsea keeper rooted to the spot.

Hiddink's team looked devoid of any idea how to defend their lead. Liverpool were tormented by Chelsea's corners in the first leg but now it was their turn to cause chaos from set pieces and they scored again in the 28th minute.

Spanish referee Luis Medina Cantelejo ruled that Branislav Ivanovic had pulled down Alonso in the penalty area as the players challenged for another Aurelio freekick.

Ivanovic, Chelsea's two-goal hero from the first leg, was now the villain as Alonso picked himself up to dispatch the penalty past Cech.

The Blues were shell-shocked and Hiddink responded by hauling off Salomon Kalou, with Nicolas Anelka replacing the Ivorian.

Hiddink sent his players out early before the start of the second half and Chelsea, finally attacking with some urgency, punished a blunder by Reina to go back in front on aggregate in the 52nd minute.

Anelka surged away from two defenders on the right wing and whipped in a low cross that Didier Drogba nudged goalwards. Reina got his hand to the ball but the Spaniard's feeble attempt saved only succeeded in pushing it into his own net.

Another goal for Liverpool would still force extra-time but Hiddink's team-talk had done its job.

Chelsea were transformed and they scored again in the 57th minute when Alex hammered a ferocious, swerving freekick past Reina from long-range.

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'Cool Riders need foreign band'

AFP, Cape Town

Kolkata Knight Riders owner Shah Rukh Khan is confident increased availability of international players will make the team more competitive in the second edition of the Indian Premier League (IPL).

The franchise finished sixth in the inaugural IPL when they struggled to build momentum with various departures and arrivals of non-Indian players, whose participation was cut short by international commitments.

But while Australia captain Ricky Ponting has ruled himself out of this season's glitz-and-glamour Twenty20 spectacular to rest, Khan believes the presence of other foreign stars will boost the Knight Riders.

"Internationally, I think the players will be more available, so we have the whole team to begin with," he told a media conference at a five-star hotel

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Ground reality

Cricket

MOHAMMAD ISAM

From the moment a cricketer turns professional, he is expected to go out and perform in all conditions. All the player has to do is turn up on every match-day morning with a positive frame of mind and without any qualms on what lies ahead.

Usually the player only has to worry about the pitch, the opposition and the umpires but when it comes to the cricket circuit in Dhaka, a few other variables are thrown into the mix.

Chief among these is the cricket ground and the basic facilities, or the lack of it. Out of eight venues with natural turf wickets, only three are deemed good enough to hold Premier League matches while the rest are for the First Division.

When the First Division ends, mats are laid on the centre wicket for Second and Third Division matches.

The venues used for the Premier League have a semblance of normality about them with grassy outfields, proper practice areas, dressing rooms and a clean environment. Sadly, the ones that

are thrust upon the lower leagues are nothing short of repulsive, i.e., the Dhaka University Ground. It is hard to find a grassy patch on the outfield while the sightscreens are torn in parts.

The dressing rooms, with stinky marquee, are placed square of the wicket and it is a 10-minute walk to reach the nearest toilet. It is hard to find a team that enters or leaves the ground with a happy face whether they won or not.

For the first time in domestic cricket history, no Premier League matches were held at the Dhamondi Cricket Stadium because of the danger it poses on and off the field. To start off with, there is no electricity supply in the dressing rooms, which are already insalubrious. Keep your bags there but you don't open even a water bottle inside.

You take a walk into the middle but you have just gone past a mirage that is the whole outfield. Laden by sand, the upper layer is green but try diving on the surface and you are bound to get up with a bad bruise.

A joke runs in the cricketing circle that whatever grass you find in 'Abahani field' is completely bogus. It rings true when you take a look at three of the pitches

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