



Joint champions Marma Sing Tripura (R) and Didar Babli are locked in combat during the final of the hundredth 'Jabbarer Boli Khela' at the historical Laldighi Maidan in Chittagong yesterday.

JABBARER BOLI KHELA Didar-Marma joint champs again

DWAIPAYAN BARUA, *Crg*

Marma Sing Tripura and Didarul Alam Didar once again jointly clinched the title of the hundredth show of 'Jabbarer Boli Khela', the traditional wrestling competition, at the historic Laldighi Maidan in the port city yesterday, as both failed to get the better of the other.

This is the fifth time Marma and Didar have become joint champions.

The organizers earlier strictly declared that this year they would pick only one boli (wrestler) as champion but they had to retreat from their stand at last when no result could be found after a marathon 28 minute fight.

Both the wrestlers attempted several times to overpower each other in the three sessions of the final round but both managed to pull out late saves.

A total of 47 bouts were held in the first round where a total of 94 wrestlers of different ages from different parts of the region participated.

Marma safely moved to the final bout as he took no time to defeat Jalal Uddin in the challenge bout. But Didar had to hold one Nur Mohammad for over fifteen minutes on the stage as the latter showed firm defensive attitude and at last the organizers sent Nur Mohammad out of the ring as time was over.

Didar, a mason from Omkhali under Ramu upazila in Cox's Bazar, has become champion for seven times while he shared the title with Marma five times in 2004, 2005, 2006, 2008 and 2009. Didar shared it with Siddique Boli from Ukhia in 2002 and defeated Marma in 2007.

Hailing from Khajragachhari Marma appeared as champion for the first time in 2003 defeating Didar and clinched the title for a total of six times while he shared it with Didar for five times.

Shipping Minister Afsarul Amin as the chief guest distributed prizes among the participants.

Both the champions were awarded with Tk 10,000 each.

Banglalink, a mobile phone operator, sponsoring the competition shared the prize money with the organizers.

Abdul Jabbar Sawdagar, a prominent local merchant of the city's Badarpata area, introduced this competition as a traditional event back in 1909 with an aim to organise and inspire the youths for anti-British movement.

Since then, the wrestling competition, the main component of the occasion, is being held on the 12th Baishakh, the first month of the Bangla year, every year.

FORMULA 1 Trulli on pole

INTERNET, *undated*

Jarno Trulli clinched pole position ahead of team-mate Timo Glock in a Toyota one-two in qualifying Saturday for Sunday's Formula One Bahrain Grand Prix. Red Bull's Sebastian Vettel, the winner in Shanghai last week, was third, ahead of Brawn GP's Jenson Button, the overall leader.

World champions Lewis Hamilton in a McLaren-Mercedes was fifth fastest, ahead of Brawn GP's Rubens Barrichello.

Renault's Fernando Alonso, Ferrari's Felipe Massa, Williams' Nico Rosberg and Ferrari's Kimi Raikkonen filled the rest of the top 10.

Heat no worry

SPORTS REPORTER



The scorching heat seems to be of no concern to any of the teams of Group A in the AFC Challenge Cup qualifiers that begin today at the Bangabandhu National Stadium.

The opening match between a youthful Myanmar side and minnows Macau could well be played under testing conditions with the temperature soaring above the 35 degrees mark. Even the timing of the opener, 3.30pm, could have a devastating effect on the sides but not according to their team bosses.

"There is no problem with the weather. We are used to such conditions," said Myanmar coach Tin Myint Aung in the team's press conference at a local hotel yesterday.

His counterpart Leung Sui Wing, the Macau coach, also seem to be unperturbed with the weather, terming it 'good conditions' but said that they needed some time to adapt.

"We started training on Friday and we train here today (Saturday) but definitely we need time to settle," said Sui Wing. Macau were the first time

to be introduced during the marathon press conference that involved all four teams including Cambodia who take on hosts Bangladesh in the other opening day fixture today.

"It (the hot weather) is no different from Cambodia. The difference between the two countries is just an hour so I don't think that will be a problem. The heat will surely be there but we have to play," said Prak Sovannara, head coach of Cambodia football team.

Apart from the weather, the focus was also on the youthful Myanmar side that will face lowly Macau today. Some of their baby-faced players, spotted at the hotel lobby, are as young as seventeen and according to their coach Myint Aung, it is time to build for the future.

"I want to make a new generation in the national team and that's why we have our under-23 team here," said Myint Aung who informed that eleven of the 23-man squad are part of Myanmar's national team.

Myanmar are the highest-ranked team among the four at No. 159 in the FIFA table and the pressure would certainly be on them to beat the hosts.

"We have played Bangladesh and players of

SEE PAGE 18 COL 5



The players of the Myanmar football team train at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday. They will be the team to beat for Bangladesh in the AFC Challenge Cup Group A qualifiers that kick off today.

Fergie wants Tevez to stay

Football

AFP, *Manchester*

Sir Alex Ferguson has shrugged off Carlos Tevez's complaints about limited first team opportunities with Manchester United and insists he is optimistic that he will hold on to the Argentinian striker this summer.

Tevez was quoted in his homeland this week as saying he will leave Old Trafford at the end of the campaign due to his lack of first team football, a claim that his manager refutes.

"Whether the games he has played are important games or not is a different question but he has played in quite a few big games," said Ferguson. "I don't want him to be unhappy because he is an important player for us."

"The difficulty is when you have got the options I have got - I bought another striker in with Berbatov, as well as having the option of playing Ronaldo as a striker - you create problems for yourself because all good players want to play in every game. But they can't play in every game in this league - it is impossible."

"I think he genuinely wants to stay here and that is something we are trying to work towards. I have told him that repeatedly. And there is not much more I can do."

The complicated background to Tevez's contract status means the former West Ham forward is only on loan at Old Trafford and is a free agent at season's end with the ability to walk out on United.

However, his work rate and effort in United's cause has been hugely impressive and Ferguson believes Tevez can take pride in

the part he has played in the team's success.

"He does give fantastic effort," said United's Scottish manager. "That is one of his best qualities. He is a tiger, he fights for every ball, he holds it up well, he is a handful to play against, we know that."

"But I go back to the point that he is has played more minutes than any of the other players up front and I think if he looked at that he would think differently."

"I think he should be here next season, I certainly hope so. Of course we are vulnerable because he is on loan, no question about that. That is our weakness."

"And when he is being asked questions about his future then it is loaded towards his future and his options. His loan period finishes at the end of the season."

"But we are where we are. Six games left in the league and at least two games left in the Champions League, hopefully at the end of the season he will realise that he has made a big contribution."

"And that is what we say to all the players. When you deal with the squad I have got - and they are all internationals - at the end of the season if we have won something, they should all feel they have made a contribution to that success."

Tevez is certainly a far more popular figure among United supporters at the moment than Dimitar Berbatov, who was jeered by a small section of supporters in the midweek home win over Portsmouth, the legacy of his disastrous FA Cup semifinal penalty miss. "It was a bad penalty and he knows that," said Ferguson. "He was disappointed in himself, don't worry about that. He is down about it. But to our supporters I say, let's move on."

Gunners aim to extend run

AFP, *London*



The sight of Arsenal stretching every sinew in this week's thrilling 4-4 draw at Liverpool will have done nothing to lift the mood of

Middlesbrough manager Gareth Southgate.

Desperate for points to boost his Middlesbrough side's increasingly desperate survival battle, Southgate will have hoped Arsenal's thoughts were now firmly fixed on next week's Champions League semifinal first leg with Manchester United.

But the evidence at Anfield suggested that Arsene Wenger's team have no intention of relinquishing their 19-game unbeaten league run - even though their title hopes have gone and a top-four finish is now all but guaranteed.

That sends out an ominous message to Boro who visit the Emirates Stadium on Sunday, three points adrift of safety and just one defeat away from equalling the club record of ten successive league defeats away from home.

Wenger believes his young side is maturing fast and is unrecognisable from the side that struggled during the opening months of the season.

The fact that this is the club's longest

unbeaten league run since the so-called 'invincibles' lifted the title in 2004 without suffering a single defeat would appear to back up the manager's claim.

The decision of the FA to charge Cesc Fabregas for the alleged spitting incident that followed Arsenal's FA Cup victory over Hull City has cast a rare shadow over the club's upbeat end to the campaign.

But while Wenger insists his captain is innocent, his concern about any possible suspension is tempered by the fact that it will be limited to domestic games only - and not hinder the Frenchman's bid to guide his side to the success in the one competition that has eluded him during his 13-year reign.

The other area of concern for example is the form of his defence whose performance against Liverpool will have given Boro at least some hope.

Wenger's analysis of that game suggests he will make changes in that department with one eye on Old Trafford next week.

"I believe that our defenders are the only players who played Wednesday night against Villarreal, Saturday against Chelsea, Tuesday against Liverpool and so at the end of the game, we were a bit jaded physically," admitted the manager.

Robin Van Persie will also miss out with a groin injury that will almost certainly keep him out against United.

But Andrei Arshavin, the four-goal hero at Anfield, will definitely play on Sunday as he is cup-tied for European competition.

Wenger may also be tempted to bring back Togo striker Emmanuel Adebayor.

"Adebayor should come back into training on Saturday and he could be in the squad. But Van Persie is definitely out," said Wenger.

Four points from the last two games have rekindled Boro's hopes of avoiding relegation but Southgate can at least draw confidence from his record of never having lost to the Gunners in five games since he took charge of the North East club.

"We want to go there and win," Southgate said. "Time's running short for us."

"Teams have been there and won there this season so we've got to take heart from that and the Emirates Stadium has been a happier hunting ground for us than Highbury was."

"We know we're going to have to produce some big results between now and the end of the season - and we might as well get on with it this weekend."

"They're 19 league games unbeaten and they'll want to continue that. But their biggest game of the season is Wednesday night (against United) and there has to be an element of that in the background for them."

Surfer Zafar travels to Hawaii

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladeshi surfer Zafar Alam, will have the opportunity to test his skills against the best in the world when he takes part in the two-month long International Freedom Surfing Contest at the island state of Hawaii next month.

Zafar, who hails from the Baharchhara village in Cox's Bazar, will become the first Bangladeshi to take part in any international surfing competition when he leaves for Hawaii today.

The opportunity to pit his wits against 250 international standard surfers in the choppy waters of the Pacific was the greatest motivation for Zafar's decision to take part in the Hawaii tournament.

In a press conference arranged before leaving, he also thanked 'Surfing the Nation' and Hawaiian native Tom Bower's timely financial intervention that helped him realize his dream.

Nor will this be Zafar's only venture into international waters. Close on the heels of his Hawaii adventure, he will travel east into the famous beaches of Bali, to take part in yet another international competition. The Bali tournament also represents another small victory for Zafar as it will see two pupils of his very own school 'Surfing Bangladesh' also attending.

Abdul Aziz (26) and Shahadat Hossain (23) are graduates of his surfing academy and they will pit their skills against 150 other competitors in the waves of the Indian Ocean in July and August.

And finally in what will be a mouth-watering occasion for enthusiasts, the surfing calendar will make a stop in the long beaches of Cox's Bazar come October 12, as the 40 pupils of Surfing Bangladesh put their boards up against competitors from the USA, Sweden, Australia, and England.

"Keep me in your prayers. We want to make our name in surfing and hopefully we will be successful one day or another," was the message from Zafar before departing for Hawaii.

Ibra eyes Spanish move

Football

AFP, *Paris*

Inter Milan forward Zlatan Ibrahimovic says he is getting restless after five years with the Serie A giants and considering a move, with Spain his favoured destination.

"I won everything in Italy, I learnt a lot from Italy. But there is a moment in your life, like when I was at Ajax, when you say to yourself you want to try something new," explained Ibrahimovic in an interview to be broadcast Monday on Eurosport.

"I think Spanish football is more the way I play. I like technical football and they play technical there," the 27-year-old said.

"I have a contract with Inter and I feel good. But as the same time I would like to test something new now because I've been in Italy for five years."

Ibrahimovic, set to lift a third straight Italian title this season with Inter, also said that when he was at Malmo he might easily have joined Arsenal in 2001 rather than Ajax.

He had talks in London with Arsene Wenger

but finally opted for Ajax.

"When I was in Malmo there was someone who invited me to Arsenal to see Mr Wenger," Ibrahimovic said.

"And I went there, I saw Patrick Vieira and the other big players who were there and when I met Wenger we spoke a little bit."

"Then Monaco, Ajax and Roma contacted me. But in the end Ajax were keener. I think it was a better solution for me even if Wenger is doing fantastic job with the young guys."

Then came a spell with Juventus, where the forward came under the tutelage of current England boss Fabio Capello and the Swede rates the disciplinarian coach highly.

"Capello helped me a lot, he trained a lot with me to learn about Italian football," he said.

Ibrahimovic said Capello once called him in to watch a tape with the instruction "this is the way you have to move in the box".

"On that tape was Marco Van Basten, all his goals. I was alone sitting there and watching the tapes of Van Basten with only goals, goals."

Ibrahimovic retained the lesson and has netted more than 150 league goals to date as well as 20 for his country.

PSG hold Lyon

AFP, *Paris*



Lyon's chances of an eighth successive French league title suffered another blow

on Friday when they were held to a 0-0 draw by fellow championship hopefuls PSG.

The draw left Lyon in third place, three points behind leaders Marseille who have a game in hand with just four matches left to play.

The champions' home form is beginning to turn into their Achilles heel in the title race as they have now won just three of their last 12 matches at the Stade Gerland.

They also face a tough run-in to the campaign with trips to Marseille and Toulouse still to come.

PSG had their best opportunity when top scorer Guillaume Hoarau was denied

by Hugo Lloris in the Lyon goal in the 58th minute, but Lyon could have won the game six minutes from time when Karim Benzema saw a shot come back off the post.

Second-placed Bordeaux, who are two points behind Marseille, take a break from league action on Saturday when they meet second division Vannes in the League Cup final.

Bordeaux coach Laurent Blanc has spent the build-up to the match lamenting the state of the game in France.

"All those who say French football is suffering from shortage of money, structures, sponsors, from the tax laws are right," said Blanc.

"In Spain or in Italy, football is an integral part of people's life. In France, save for two or three points on the compass, it's entertainment, a show. The problem is we will never manage to close the gap."

French players have for

decades made a name for themselves in England, Italy and Spain and Frank Ribery has achieved stardom with Bayern Munich in the German Bundesliga.

But the domestic league has struggled in the meantime with several of the more successful clubs of yesteryear, such as Nantes and Saint Etienne, struggling badly.

Lyon, while sweeping all before them in Ligue 1, have consistently failed to move up a gear in Europe, regularly getting through the group phase of the Champions League only to crash out shortly afterwards without ever reaching even a semifinal.

Next Wednesday Bordeaux will travel to French Cup finalists Rennes for their next league match by which time they could be five points adrift of Marseille, who have a tough match at sixth-placed Lille on Saturday.



Lyon star Juninho (C) runs past Paris Saint Germain midfielder Jeremy Clement (L) and forward Guillaume Hoarau during their League One tie at the Gerland Stadium on Friday.