

Pakistan draw with China

AFP, Kuantan

Three-time former champions Pakistan pulled off a face-saving 1-1 draw with China with just 40 seconds remaining in their opening Asia Cup tie at the Kuantan Hockey Stadium here Saturday.

The Chinese, who had beaten Pakistan 3-2 in the last Asia Cup in 2007 in Chennai, took the lead in the 61st minute through Hu Hui Ren.

China were coasting to another upset when a last-minute goalmouth melee allowed the Pakistanis to secure a precious point.

The move in the 70th minute saw Akhtar Ali scoring from close range when the Chinese defenders failed to clear in their semi-circle.

The match proved to be an anti-climax as the Pakistanis, with the return of four highly experienced players, were expected to dominate and collect full points.

Zia 14th in Mayor's Cup

SPORTS REPORTER

Grand Master Ziaur Rahman finished 14th in the second Mumbai Mayor's Cup Open International Chess Tournament in Mumbai, India yesterday.

GM Niaz Mursheed became 23rd in the meet.

In the last round matches, Zia beat IM Sudhakar Babu of India and Niaz beat Saurabh Kherdekar of India.

A total of 415 players including 22 Grand Masters, 21 International Masters from several countries participated in the event.

Abahani

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Rupu also said that they were hopeful of winning the trophy and the team had got enough time for preparation and the players were physically fit for putting up their best.

Abahani will employ two foreign players in Ibrahim and Samad, and the good news for them is that star striker Emily will be available for all matches.

The team manager also informed that they would set up the game strategy after watching the opponents' video footages, which have been collected from AFC earlier.

Meanwhile Sri Lanka Army team has already arrived in the capital yesterday and Ashgabat Turkmenistan are due this afternoon. All three participating teams will hold a pre-tournament press conference tomorrow at the BFF House.

The rate of the tickets for this tournament has been fixed at Tk 10 (eastern gallery), Tk 20 (western gallery) and Tk 50 (VIP enclosure). School students will be admitted free into the stadium on presentation of a valid student ID card.



Did U Know?

Nona Gaprindashvili of Georgia was the first woman to win a men's chess tournament in 1977.



SCORES IN BRIEF



PHOTO: STAR

Bangladesh Under-19s opener Amit Mazumder (R) celebrates reaching his hundred in the fifth and final one-dayer against Sri Lanka Under-19s at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday.

All-Russian final

Tennis

AFP, Rome

World number one Dinara Safina booked a date with Svetlana Kuznetsova in the WTA Rome clay court international final after an epic three-set victory over Venus Williams on Friday.

Safina came back from a set down to beat the five-time Wimbledon champion 6-7, 6-3, 6-4 in a match that lasted more than three hours.

Her Russian compatriot Kuznetsova had a far easier semifinal as she stormed past Victoria Azarenka 6-2, 6-4.

It is the second week running the two Russians will play in a final after Kuznetsova beat Safina in the Stuttgart final 6-4, 6-3 last Sunday.

Top seed Safina started slowly against the fourth seed, as she had done all tournament,

and for the third straight match she dropped the opening set.

Williams had been the more aggressive and positive in that opener, hitting twice as many winners but also 50 per cent more unforced errors.

But the roles had reversed by the end of the match and Williams was gracious in defeat.

She went up a break in the second set but Safina stormed back to win that 6-3 and set up the decider.

That was a see-saw affair with five breaks of serve and numerous other opportunities.

A backhand crosscourt winner from Safina gave her a third break and a 5-4 advantage, after which she served for the match.

But the last game was the most epic of all as Safina served three double faults, saved four break points and finally clinched victory on her third match point.

It was the first time she had

beaten Williams.

It is the second final each here for the two Russians having both finished runner-up once before, Safina in 2006 and Kuznetsova a year later.

But having both reached successive clay court finals it does well for Roland Garros, which starts later this month, although Kuznetsova insisted she's not looking that far ahead.

The result never looked in doubt as she dominated her Belarusian opponent from the start, breezing through the first set with three breaks of serve to one.

However, the sixth-seeded teenager broke Kuznetsova in the first game of the second set and looked to make more of a fist of things.

However, the match turned on a controversial point at 2-0 to Azarenka, when on game point Kuznetsova hit a shot that television replays showed had landed just out.

The umpire called it in despite Azarenka's vociferous protests and the 19-year-old let the matter get to her as she lost her way, and five straight games.

Amnesty

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The rebel cricketers has been also worried with their fate with the BCB if they ultimately scrap the contract but BCB director Yunus found no reason to be worried with the future.

"I think BCB already showed that they are liberal enough because we recommended only a six-month cooling period for the cricketers. And since we made a public statement, there is no way they can think like that. If someone fulfills the requirement he will definitely be considered for the international cricket," assured Yunus.

Salma Rafiq

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because of the gravity of her illness. She was the executive editor of Krira Jagat, once regarded as the best-read Bangla sports magazine.

Hailing from a sports family, Salma played a lot of games during her Dhaka University days when she was part of the fantastic Rokeya Hall trio of Sultan Kamal and Nazma Shamim who excelled in athletics.

After completing her honours in Bangla, she started her long career as a journalist in 1972. After working in The Daily Azad and weekly Kishore Bangla, she joined Krira Jagat when it was first launched in 1977. Since then she not only devoted herself in lifting the image of Krira Jagat but also involved in different sport federations.

Despite her tireless effort, Salma won one noticeable award -- the best women's sportswriter from the Bangladesh Sports Writers Association this year.

Awards however will mean little to a selfless lady, who will definitely remain in the heart of countless reporters for the support she offered when those reporters turned to her to learn the basics.

Nafis carries BU

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But Dada's start could not have predicted such a disastrous ending after their openers Zunaed Siddiqui and Saeed Anwar Jr added 116 runs for the opening stand in just 13.1 overs. Left-handed Zunaed kept up his good form, hitting six sixes and as many boundaries in his chancy 50-ball 77.

The innings was terminated in Younis's first over, fourteenth of the innings, when Kapugedera caught Zunaed. Four balls later, Anwar was caught behind off the same bowler for a run-a-ball 33. The two had added 108 for the opening stand against Pirates of Chittagong only the day before.

Younus, who took a hattrick with 3 for 17 against Top Sports on Wednesday, took his third wicket when he took a stunning return catch of Kashif Naved. The Pakistani all-rounder smashed one straight but Younis's bucket-like hands snaffled up the half-chance.

Gleef Brothers Union secretary Mohammad Elias announced a Dhaka-Kuala Lumpur return air ticket for two and another well-wisher Siraj Ullah declared a prize of 500 dollars for Nafis.

SCORES IN BRIEF
DADA WARRIORS: 170-5 in 20 overs (Anwar 33, Zunaed 77, Faisal 20, Imran 4, Kashif 19, Anwar 3*, Kamrul 4*, Younis 3-).

WC games only

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and demands from different quarters to hold at least two matches in Chittagong but Yunus said that they chose two venues in Dhaka considering our own cost."

"What I can say is that Chittagong is not very convenient for staging World Cup matches because of various reasons. We took one venue in Dhaka and another close to Dhaka to organise it smoothly," he explained.

In reply to another question he said that the board unanimously decided to upgrade venues in Chittagong on March 16, 2007.

Amit century makes it 4-1

SPORTS REPORTER

A superb hundred from Bangladesh Under-19s opener Amit Mazumder took the home side to a three-wicket win in the fifth and final one-dayer against Sri Lanka Under-19s at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday.

Chasing 228 for the win, left-hander Amit shamed off the loss of two early wickets and smashed 102. He was dismissed soon after reaching the three-figure mark but Taibur Rahman remained unbeaten on 27 to see his side make it 4-1 in the one-day series.

Amit, who scored a century in the second four-day game too, hit ten boundaries and three sixes in his 127-ball knock. With his side in trouble, the free-scoring lefty added 132 for the third wicket with Anamul Haque (38) but both batsmen fell in successive balls of the 34th over to leave the home side at 148 for five. But the cool headed pair of Taibur and Sabbir Rahman (37) added 43 for the seventh wicket before Taibur, with a six and three boundaries, finished the job.

Earlier electing to bat first, the visitors were bowled out for 227 runs in the 50th over with a handy but slow 52 from Kusal Perera and a later order contribution from Chathura Peries, who scored 30 off 43 balls.

Junior athletics

SPORTS REPORTER

BKSP dominated the Dhaka Bank 25th National Junior Athletics Competition winning seven gold medals in the track and field events at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday. Comilla District Sports Association (DSA) followed the leader securing three gold medals.

A total of 304 promising athletes from 38 districts, educational institutions and affiliated associations across the country are taking part in the 33 events of this competition. 12 events were decided on the first day.

Gold medalists of the day's events are: Milan of Kushita (800m race for juvenile boys), Poly Akther of BKSP (800m race for juvenile girls), Kulsum Akther of Dhaka Division (shot put for girls), Mezbahul Haque of BKSP (high jump for boys), Hosna Akther of Comilla (javelin throw for juvenile girls), Habibur Rahman of Comilla (long jump for juvenile boys), Taslima Akther of BKSP (long jump for juvenile girls), Sherin Akther of BKSP (high jump for girls), Mesbah Ahmed of BKSP (200m sprint for boys), Sherin Akther of BKSP (200m sprint for girls), Faruqul Islam of Comilla (200m sprint for juvenile boys) and Taslima Akther of BKSP (200m sprint for juvenile girls).

State Minister for Youth and Sports Ahad Ali Sarker inaugurated the two-day meet as chief guest in the afternoon.

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

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PCB to sue ICC

Cricket

AFP, Lahore

Pakistan is mounting a legal challenge to the International Cricket Council's decision to move its World Cup matches over security fears, the country's cricket governing body said Saturday.

Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) said the decision to deprive it of the fixtures was legally flawed, and that it had served notice of the challenge through its lawyer to ICC president David Morgan.

"The PCB believes that the manner in which the decision was taken, with no security assessment of Pakistan or any other host country and without the issue being on the agenda of the meeting, it was legally flawed," PCB chairman Ijaz Butt said Saturday.

The ICC last month stripped Pakistan of 14 World Cup matches, including a semi-final, citing the "uncertain security situation" in the country.

Co-hosts India will now host 29 matches inclusive of a semifinal and the final, while Sri Lanka will host 12 matches with one semi-final and Bangladesh eighth matches and the opening ceremony.