



Did U Know?

Baron Pierre de Coubertin, the father of the modern Olympic Games, was a fencer.



- BTV**
AFC President's Cup Qualifier
Abahani v Ashgabat FC
Live from 6:00pm
- SET Max**
Indian Premier League
Chennai Super Kings v Mumbai Indians
Live from 4:30pm
- STAR Cricket**
England v West Indies
Second Test, Day Three
Live from 4:00pm
- ESPN**
English Premier League
Man United v Arsenal
Live at 5:40pm
- STAR Sports**
English Premier League
Bolton Wanderers v Hull City
Live from 7:55pm
- Primera Liga**
Villarreal v Real Madrid
Live from 2:00am (Sunday)



Day's Event
AFC President's Cup Qualifier
Abahani v Ashgabat FC
Time: 6:00pm
Venue: Bangabandhu National Stadium



Steven Gerrard
(Liverpool soccer captain)
"When you look at the quality of the players there are in this (English Premier) league, it's a great privilege to win this kind of award. The quality is getting better and better each year so to win this award is a great achievement for myself."
After winning the Football Writers Association's player-of-the-year award on Wednesday.

JU, BUET in semis

SPORTS REPORTER
Khaled Mosharrar and Fayaz Ahmed starred as Jahangirnagar University moved into the semifinals with a 29-run win over Chittagong University in the Public University & Services cricket tournament at the BKSP in Savar yesterday.
Khaled slammed 90 to help his side reach 193 before Fayaz picked up four wickets to bowl out Chittagong University for 164 runs in 47.2 overs.
Away at the Jahangirnagar University ground, BUET (212 all out) crushed Bangladesh Police (125 all out) by 87 runs.
BUET take on Bangladesh Biman while Jahangirnagar University face Dhaka University in the two semifinals today.

First place clash today

Abahani up against Ashgabat

SPORTS REPORTER



Abahani and Ashgabat Football Club will meet today for the all-important qualifying match (Group B) for the final stage of the AFC President's Cup at the Bangabandhu National Stadium.

The champions of all three groups of the President Cup qualifiers along with the best runner-up will advance to the final stage, which will be played later this year.

It is the third and concluding match of the tournament and will be shown live by state owned Bangladesh Television (BTV) from 6pm.

Ashgabat are being tipped as favourites for the match as they scored heavily against a weak Sri Lanka Army on Thursday but local giants Abahani are unnerved about their superiority.

"They are a skilled outfit and spread the play around using the entire field. Their height, physique and skills do give them an added advantage over us but I don't see a reason why we can't beat them provided we put in our best effort. There are no injury concerns in our team and we have made good use of the three days we were off so there has been enough preparation for tomorrow," said Abahani team manager Satyajit Das Rupu.

Rupu looked after Abahani's practice session yesterday at their club ground in Dhanmondi as head coach Amalesh Sen is still ill even though he was present for training yesterday. The team however could not have a full session due to incessant rain in the afternoon.

Star striker Zahid Hossain Emily was confident of the Sky Blues' ability to beat the opposition and believed that there was no reason for players to put extra pressure on themselves after Ashgabat's brilliant show on Thursday.

"Just thinking about how good they are is only going to add extra pressure so we are just concentrating on the match and as a team we are fully capable of a win; we just need to play our strongest game. Playing at home will be an advantage for us and we look forward to all the crowd support which is always very inspiring."

Emily was suffering from a long injury to his left hamstring but informed that he has recovered fully to take the field once again. The national striker spent most of the time on the field against Sri Lanka Army on Tuesday although he struggled to play his natural game.

Meanwhile, Ashgabat also struggled to practice yesterday due to rain and their training at the Big Bowl was cancelled at the last minute. They were later taken to the Shaheed Mohammad Mostafa Stadium (SMMS) in Kamalapur where head coach Grigoriyants

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Abahani goalkeeper Biplab Bhattacharya (L) stretches along with some of his teammates at their club ground in Dhanmondi yesterday.

India finish fifth

South Korea take on Pakistan in final today

Hockey

AFP, Kuantan

India took fifth place in the Asia Cup field hockey tournament when they defeated Japan 5-1 in the classification play off here on Friday.

This is the first time the Indians, who were defending champions and also won the cup in 2003, finished outside the top four in the Asia Cup.

The Indians, ranked ninth in the world, played below par but had enough in reserve to defeat the 11th ranked Japanese.

India found their goal scoring touch late in the game to walk off easy winners while Japan, having already booked their place in the World Cup Qualifiers in November, felt the result of the match was academic.

The Indians started off well when Rajpal Singh scored in the very first minute off a field goal and skipper Sandeep Singh made it 2-0 in the 21st minute when he flicked home from the

penalty corner.
The match turned scrappy and a defensive lapse in the 32nd minute allowed Japan's Hiroki Sakamoto to score a field goal before half time and the second half failed to improve the performance level of the two teams although India had the better of the proceedings.

They finally scored the third goal in the 64th minute through Tushar Khandker and three minutes later Prabhjot Singh added the fourth goal from a field attempt. Khandker then added his second goal in the 70th minute for a flattering 5-1 win.

The final of the Asia Cup will be played on Saturday with Pakistan meeting South Korea. The winner will also gain an automatic berth to the 2010 World Cup to be held in New Delhi, India. The third place play off will see hosts Malaysia against China.

The losing finalist, Malaysia, China and Japan have qualified for the World Cup Qualifiers which will be held in Lille, Auckland and Dubai in November. India have already

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Two want ICL release

Cricket

CRICINFO, undated

The ICL is set to lose most of its leading Indian players, including Deep Dasgupta and Abhishek Jhunjhunwala, with the unauthorised league believed to have received over 40 release requests from those who want to take up the BCCI's recent amnesty offer.

Dasgupta, the former India wicketkeeper, and Jhunjhunwala, who was line for an India call-up, confirmed their release requests to Cricinfo, and sources said that Ambati Rayudu, Hemang Badani, Rohan Gavaskar and Ibrahim Khaleel are also on that list.

The ICL had asked its players - around 85 Indians and 70 foreigners - and support staff to submit their release requests by today following the BCCI's amnesty offer on April 29. Madan Lal, the former India allrounder and coach, Balwinder Sandhu, Karsan Ghavri and Sandip Patil have already approached the ICL for a release.

It is not clear yet though about the position of ICL's foreign recruits though most are retired players and have nothing significant to look forward. The significant exceptions are most of them, except for New Zealand's Shane Bond and Darryl Tuffey, and Pakistani players Mohammad Yousof, Imran Nazir, Rana Naved-

ul-Hasan and Abdul Razzaq.
Dasgupta and Jhunjhunwala said they hoped to get their release letters on May 20, 11 days before the BCCI's amnesty deadline ends. The two statemates said that they look forward to representing Bengal in first class cricket and possibly get to play a role in the IPL next year.

"I still have two or three years of cricket left in me," Dasgupta told Cricinfo. "I am not sure what is happening with the ICL, and would love to play for Bengal now. The IPL is also a possibility but I don't want to jump the gun at this stage."

Jhunjhunwala said the other reason why he wanted to return to official cricket was his desire to play four-day cricket. "The ICL is confined largely to a Twenty20 format, and I am very eager to play the longer version. I have no complaints about the ICL though because they provided the best opportunities possible."

Dasgupta and Jhunjhunwala cited "the lack of cricket for the last six to seven months" as another factor. After their last November's programme was cut short due to the Mumbai attacks, the ICL cancelled their March schedule due to the recession and non-availability of Pakistan players.

Meanwhile, Sri Lanka Cricket (SLC) has decided to give a three-month cooling period to its ICL contracted players before they can be accepted into the system, provided they cut off

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Kumara Sangakkara (C) of Kings XI Punjab celebrates after running-out Delhi Daredevils' Gautam Gambhir during their IPL Twenty20 match at the Outsurance Oval Cricket Stadium in Bloemfontein yesterday.

Day 2 play washed out

AFP, Chester-Le-Street

Play in the second day of the second Test between England and the West Indies at the Riverside here on Friday was abandoned for the day without a ball being bowled.

After persistent rain all day the umpires called off play shortly after 4pm local time (1500GMT).

England, having won the toss, were 302 for two with Alastair Cook 126 not out and night watchman James Anderson unbeaten on four.

England lead the two-Test series 1-0.

Zia keeps winning

SPORTS REPORTER

Grand Master Ziaur Rahman beat International Master Toufighi Homayoun of Iran yesterday in the third round of the 8th Asian Continental Chess Championship at Olongapo in Philippines yesterday.

He now shares the second position with nine other grandmasters.

Earlier in the second round Zia drew with Fide Master Novita Anjas of Indonesia.

GM Enamul Hossain Rajib and GM Niaz Murshed earned a point each after the third round of games.

Rajib drew with Jia Haoxiang of China and Niaz lost against GM Zhou Weiqi also from China.

Indian GM Sandipan Chanda is now the solo leader in the points table with three points after the third round.

In the women's section WFM Samima Akter Liza earned one point after beating WFM Tay Li Jin-Jeslin of Singapore after the third round.

Punjab still in the hunt

INTERNET, undated



Kings XI Punjab kept their hopes of a place in the semifinals of the IPL alive with a six-wicket win over a below-par Delhi Daredevils in Bloemfontein.

Leaders Delhi opted to shuffle their deck, seemingly with one eye on the semis, and they looked disjointed with both bat and ball.

Their effort with the bat reaped a disappointing 120/9, but Kings XI made hard work of chasing down their target and they limped over the line with 5 balls remaining.

The Daredevils made changes to their side and Virender Sehwag and Gautam Gambhir came together at the top of the order once again.

Sehwag played a couple of sweet shots that whistled to the boundary, but an effort ball from Brett Lee tucked him up and he gloved a ball behind to Kumar Sangakkara.

Gambhir looked comfortable at the crease, but ran himself out taking on Wilkin Mota on the fine leg fence.

Tillikaratne Dilshan and AB de Villiers have been big players for Delhi but both fell cheaply in identical circumstances picking out Yuvraj at mid-on off the bowling of Sree

Sreesanth.
Sreesanth was in dire need of a confidence boost and he finished his spell in excellent fashion, hitting the deck and getting the ball to swing.

Dinesh Karthik and Mithun Manhas came together and built a platform with partnership of 50, but the latter fell to the bowling of Mota and Delhi's innings crumbled.

Brett Lee came back and capped off a fiery spell with three wickets as a focused Kings XI restricted Delhi to 120 for 9.

Simon Katich provided Kings XI with the perfect platform, as he smashed Pradeep Sangwan for 18 in his first over.

Farveez Maharoof claimed the wicket of Katich with his first ball and Sunny Sohal lost his leg stump to the excellent Ashish Nehra.

The turning point in the game came in the same over, as Gambhir put down a routine slip catch that gave a life to Kings XI skipper Yuvraj.

Yuvraj was nowhere near his fluent best, but he provided useful support to Kumar Sangakkara (43*) in a 53-run partnership.

The Kings XI skipper fell with 32 runs still required, but Irfan Pathan came in and blasted three sixes in his 21 from 18 balls to steer Kings XI home with five balls to spare.

Shakib grabs top honour

SPORTS REPORTER

It came as no surprise to the jam-packed audience when Shakib Al Hasan was declared the Sportsman of the Year during the Grameenphone-Prothom Alo Sports Awards ceremony yesterday.

The smiling boy from Magura played all-rounder to the core last year which paved the way for him to snatch the number one spot in the ICC ranking and as a result, it was obvious that he got the honour as the country's leading cellular phone operator and the leading daily awarded the top sportspersons of the year 2008 at a local hotel.

In the first quarter of the year, Shakib scored heavily with the bat and continued his form throughout the year but what made him special was his outstanding performance with his left-arm spin to prove his coach Jamie Siddons, who declared him as a main spinner in the team, right.

Shakib brought the Tigers almost close to a

Test victory against major Test nation when he destroyed New Zealand with seven for 36 in Chittagong.

For the jury there was actually none better than Shakib to hand the award of the Sportsman of the Year which also confirmed that cricketers are still dominating this award.

"I am honoured. It is a very important award. It will encourage me to do much better performance," said Shakib, who also sang a song with few of his teammates at the function.

Like the previous years, the event brought the whole sporting arena under one roof where past and current sporting icons got together in the cordial ceremony, hosted by Prothom Alo's Sports Editor Utpal Shuvro with his characteristic style where he first declared the winner of the Lifetime Achievement award.

The award went to Bashir Ahmed who represented East Pakistan football and hockey team as well as being involved in other sports like athletics... a multi-skilled sportsman.

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Winners and judges of Grameenphone-Prothom Alo Sports Awards 2008 pose with Prothom Alo Editor Matiur Rahman (4th from L) and Grameenphone's chief communications officer Rubaba Dowla (R) at a local hotel yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR