

Nafis guides BD A on rain-hit day

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh A made a confident start before rain brought an early end to the first day's play of the second four-day match against Maharashtra Cricket Association (MCA) at the Sher-e-Bangla National Cricket Stadium in Mirpur yesterday.

The entire last session was washed out following down-pour with the second string Bangladesh side reaching 158-3 in 64 overs.

A 106-run third wicket partnership between Nafis Iqbal and captain Mehrab Hossain gave the local side a solid platform after being put into bat.

Opener Nafis remained not out on 75 and the right-hander smashed eleven boundaries in his 183-ball innings while Mehrab returned to pavilion with a 145-ball 54 that featured eight boundaries before he was caught by Rohit

SEE PAGE 18 COL 1



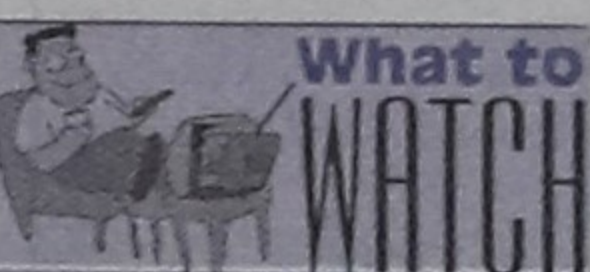
Did U Know?

Bjorn Borg has the most singles titles at the French Open, with 6. Chris Evert holds the record for the women, with 7.



Manuel Pellegrini

(Real Madrid's new coach)
"When I started my career 23 years ago I said that I would end it by leading Real Madrid. Now that I have accomplished that, I can say that it is a dream." After he was given charge of the Spanish giants on Tuesday.



STAR Sports

French Open
Live from 6:00pm
ESPN

Sportscentre India
Sports News
Live at 8:30pm



Bangladesh A v MCA XI
Four-Day Match, Day Two
Venue: Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium, Mirpur

Lauwai crush Royal Bengal

SPORTS REPORTER

Sylhet's Lauwai Sporting Club rode on Jewel's hat-trick to crush Royal Bengal Club of Sunamganj 7-0 in the zonal match of the Bashundhara Champions Club Cup football competition at the Habiganj Stadium yesterday.

Jewel struck four goals while Kamrul scored two goals and Wahid netted the other goal for the winners.

In the day's other match, SEE PAGE 18 COL 8



PHOTO: STAR

Players of the Town Secondary School of Barisal rejoice with the Citycell National School Football Championship trophy after beating Victoria High School of Moulvibazar in the final at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

Town triumph in style

SPORTS REPORTER

It was style and substance which crowned Town Secondary School of Barisal champions of the Citycell National School Football Championship beating Victoria High School of Moulvibazar 3-1 at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

The match got underway amidst light rain and soon after the first whistle, in the 17th minute to be precise, Victoria's Khaled Ahmed got the lead for his team. Both teams maintained equal possession of the ball throughout the first-half, but still the match went into the break with the score at 1-0.

The weather had improved by the time the second-half started and so did Town's performance and display of football. The champions took most of the possession and 21 minutes into the half they levelled the score with Ali shooting the ball past Victoria's custodian.

Ten minutes later Ali scored his second goal, which gave the Barisal school the lead as well. A through pass was comfortably lodged into the nets against an onrushing Victoria goalkeeper to make the score-line 2-1 for the champs. But, the best was clearly left for the last as Town

striker Jumman netted the show-stopping goal from the extreme right flank.

Taking aim from twenty yards away Jumman jammed the ball in the far left corner of the goalpost where even the outstretched hands of the goalie were not enough to intercept the glorious end to the match.

Town head coach Moshikul Alam Swapan attributed the success of his team to his players' confidence and self-belief.

"My team had the confidence and self-belief throughout this tournament but after the first-half when we were 1-0 down the boys were a little nervous. But, I knew that we would bounce back and we did. The freekick that Jumman scored was the best goal in the tournament that I have seen. I would like to thank the Bangladesh Football Federation and Citycell for organising such a wonderful meet for the schools of the country and I hope it becomes an annual event," said Swapan.

Ali of the champion team became the man-of-the-final for scoring two goals and Rubel Miah of Govindaganj Bahumukhi High School became the player-of-the-tournament scoring 22 goals.

State Minister for Youth and Sports Ahad Ali Sarker and CEO of Citycell Michael Seymour distributed the prizes among the winners and runners-up after the match.

No cricket at BNS: Ahad

SPORTS REPORTER

State Minister for Youth and Sports Ahad Ali Sarker has once again clarified the stance of the government yesterday announcing that no cricket matches of the ICC Cricket World Cup 2011 will be played at the Bangabandhu National Stadium (BNS).

Speaking to reporters at the stadium during the half-time of the final of the Citycell National School Football Championship yesterday, Ahad said that the prime minister, the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Youth and Sports and the sports ministry have decided in an informal forum that only football and athletics would be played at the BNS because it was not practically possible to hold any other sports.

"The opening ceremony of the 2011 World Cup will be held here at BNS but no cricket matches. The Bangladesh Cricket Board has asked for the ground for cricket matches but my ministry, the parliamentary committee and the prime minister have jointly decided against it," said Ahad.

The minister also believed that football had had a rebirth in the country and that BNS was being regularly used for football fixtures and athletics throughout the year.

"There is a new wave of football in the country especially at the district level and the Bangladesh Football Federation is consistently using the BNS for their leagues and championship matches. Also, the stadium has an athletic track which enables the ground to stage athletic competitions so all of those will come to a complete stop if this

SEE PAGE 18 COL 4

Shakib exudes confidence

TIGERCRIKET.COM, Nottingham



After fighting it out boldly in two serious practice games against Australia and Sri Lanka the confidence is high in the Bangladesh camp as they prepare for the first match of the ICC World T20 against India on June 6.

Faced with the mammoth task of making 220 against Australia the Tigers were on course halfway through the chase before the asking rate got too stiff. On Tuesday they had Sri Lanka in trouble following an inspired spell of bowling before going down with two balls to spare.

"Our preparation has gone well so far I think. We have beaten the sides below us (Holland and Scotland) and we ran New Zealand, Australia and Sri Lanka very close. We fought all the way and created winning situations. This has boosted our confidence," said all-rounder Shakib Al Hasan who called for a better effort in the field.

"Against Sri Lanka we did not bat well but the bowling brought us back in the game. We were in fine batting form against Australia and were going at 10 an over for most part. Our fielding has not been up to the mark yet so we need to work on that. It is a bit windy in England and we I think we have to adjust to that when we field."

Shakib had fantastic bowling figures of 4-0-18-2 against Sri Lanka which pulled the game back for Bangladesh and had been quite consistent

with the bat so far. But the world's number one all-rounder in ODIs wasn't prepared to sit on laurels.

"Twenty20 is still a new format for me and I have not played that many games. I have done well in ODIs but we'll see how it goes in this tournament. The practice matches give us indication of where we are and I have made a few runs and taken wickets. So I am going into this tournament very confident," said Shakib who also thought the competition provided a good opportunity for players in the Bangladesh side to show their worth.

"You can say that we don't

receive as much attention as players of some other countries but I never think in that line. For me every game is a chance to show the world what you can do. We have some exciting talents in this squad and good performances for the team will raise their profile. That is an incentive."

Meeting India in the first match of the group would surely bring back memories of the 2007 World Cup game at Port of Spain where Bangladesh won by 5 wickets and subsequently knocked India out of the competition but Shakib was more focused on getting the process right for the clash.

SEE PAGE 18 COL 4



SHAKIB AL HASAN

Ireland slates ICC

Cricket

CRICINFO, undated

Warren Deutrom, the chief executive of Cricket Ireland (CI), has launched a stinging attack on the International Cricket Council (ICC) and the way it handles cricket below Test level.

The ICC has sunk millions of pounds into Associate and Affiliate cricket, and established several global competitions, but speaking to the Wisden Cricketer, Deutrom was unimpressed.

"What is the point of Associate cricket?" he said. "Ireland has proved itself head and shoulders above the rest of the Associate nations, winning all the available titles in every form of the game - four-day, 50-over and Twenty20. Yet we are bumping up against a glass ceiling. What does the ICC want us to do? How do we get from high-performance programme to the higher echelons of the world game? There is no road map for us. The issue brings to question the whole mission statement of the ICC High Performance programme: what is it preparing teams for?"

Deutrom has made no secret of his ambition to see Ireland play Test cricket, but he admitted there was little prospect of that happening in the near future. And, without that goal, he

concluded, what was the point of the Associate merry-go-round?

"Three or four years from now there will be no new entrants in to the cosy club of full Test members. That is a significant frustration. It shows that despite the massive investment in the Associate programme, costing over 200 million pounds over seven years, there is no stepping stone from No.1 of the Associate countries, into the Test world."

"Inclusion in the Future Tours programme gives guaranteed fixtures, which allows the CI board to put together a commercial package with some certainty. This makes it interesting for broadcasters, and then sponsors, ticketing and hospitality. Currently, we don't know what next year's fixtures are going to be. We are not saying that Ireland deserves to be a Test nation tomorrow but what steps do we need to take to get there?"

In a separate conversation, Deutrom told Cricinfo: "We are all aware that there is no established pathway to Test cricket for Associates, and ascension to the Full Member ranks by (for example) Sri Lanka, Zimbabwe and Bangladesh appears to have happened rather haphazardly. For me, having top Associates playing the bottom-ranked Test teams is pure common sense and the first step in breaching the glass ceiling separating the Full Member and Associate world."

Pakistan learnt lesson

CRICINFO, undated



Pakistan coach Intikhab Alam believes his team is now mentally equipped to handle any sort of situation and has grown stronger from the disappointment suffered two years ago in the inaugural World Twenty20 final, which they lost to arch-rivals India by just five runs.

"I was commenting when we lost and it was very disappointing," Alam said after the team's training session on Tuesday evening, ahead of the warm-up game against India at The Oval, which will be their final practice fixture before the tournament proper begins on Friday.

Alam hopes the players involved in that pulsating final two years ago, played in front of a sellout crowd at the Wanderers, have learnt from that episode and moved on. Back then Pakistan needed 54 from 24 balls with only three wickets in hand but Misbahul Haq almost turned the game on its head with some sumptuous strokeplay. 13 were needed off the final over and

Misbah punished the inexperienced Joginder Sharma with a huge six to an easy full toss. But on the third ball, trying to scoop it over fine leg, he mis-cued and was caught by Sreesanth.

"I'm sure the boys and Misbah have got over what happened in the final two years ago. And after two years we are now more mentally prepared to handle such a situation," Alam said.

Alam is also not worried by the fact that none of the Pakistan players featured in the second IPL, as they were barred by the PCB from playing the tournament in the

wake of the tensions between India and Pakistan post 26/11 terrorist attacks in Mumbai. When the tournament was moved out of India - over security reasons - the Pakistan players were hopeful of returning but IPL officials said it wouldn't be possible as the squads had already been finalised earlier. "Our players not figuring in the IPL has no bearing in this tournament," Alam said.

Pakistan haven't played much cricket of late apart from the ODI series against Australia in the UAE. The rustiness of their players was

SEE PAGE 18 COL 2



PHOTO: AFP

Russia's Svetlana Kuznetsova plays a forehand against American Serena Williams (not in picture) during their French Open quarterfinal match at Roland Garros in Paris yesterday.

Latest

AFP, Paris

Roger Federer reached his 20th consecutive Grand Slam semifinal on Wednesday with a 7-6 (8/6), 6-2, 6-4 win over France's Gael Monfils to close in on a first French Open and a record-equalling 14th major.

World number two Federer will face either Juan Martin del Potro or Tommy Robredo for a place in the Roland Garros final.

with a double-fault in her next service game.

Williams broke again when Kuznetsova was serving for the set at 5-4, but after surviving a setpoint at 5-6 down on her own serve the Russian played