

Grameen Danone Nations Cup starts today

SPORTS REPORTER

The 2nd Grameen Danone Nations Cup Football Tournament for the 10-12 years old booters begins today at seven zonal venues across the country.

A total of 44 district teams will take part in the three-day first phase matches at the seven zonal venues -- Gazipur, Nilphamari, Kushtia, Feni, Sirajganj, Rajbari and Satkhira -- under the direct supervision of Bangladesh Football Federation Development Committee.

Forty-one matches will be held on the opening day in the morning and afternoon sessions.

The duration of the match will be 30 minutes -- fifteen minutes in each half. Maximum 14 players will be eligible to play for a team.

The zonal phase will be held on single league basis. Later, eight teams -- seven zonal champions and BFF development squad -- will play in the final round to be held in Dhaka on July 4-6.

Finally, the champion team will represent Bangladesh in the Grameen Danone Nations Cup Football Festival final to be held October 9-11 at Sao Paulo in Brazil.

As on previous occasion, legendary footballer Zinedine Zidane will inaugurate the Nations Cup Festival Final as the chief guest.

The 1st Grameen Danone Nations Cup was held in 2007.

Venus' sweet

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London on top of the world rankings following her French Open victory. But a miserable run of results since that Paris triumph have left her outside the top 10 for the first time in two years.

The 13th seed, a Wimbledon semi-finalist in 2007, clearly has the game for grass however and was too strong for Stosur.

Former Wimbledon junior champion Caroline Wozniacki, the ninth seed, reached the fourth round for the first time as the Danish teenager defeated Spain's Anabel Medina Garrigues 6-2, 6-2.

What lies

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could play a vital role and he was the chief executive officer (CEO) but that post has been vacant for nearly two years now (it is run by an acting CEO currently).

So, definitely the players should take the blame for the on-field performance but in these modern days it's also important to see who actually runs the show behind the curtains and how!

Alam's focus

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removal from the national team for the first World Twenty20 two years ago.

"I want to give a performance which cap my return to international cricket in a memorable manner," said Yusuf, whose last Test was in Bangalore in December 2007.

"It will be tough because when you play international cricket after a big gap it's difficult, but I will do my best to play my part in the team's win against Sri Lanka, who are a very tough team on their home grounds."

All-rounder Abdul Razzaq, who broke his ties with the ICL earlier this month, also makes a return and would be a certainty for the Tests as third seamer.

SQUAD

Younus Khan (captain), Misbah-ul-Haq (vice captain), Salman Butt, Khuram Manzoor, Shoaib Malik, Mohammad Yousuf, Kamran Akmal, Abdul Razzaq, Fawad Alam, Umar Gul, Faisal Iqbal, Mohammad Aamir, Danish Kaneria, Saeed Ajmal, Abdul Rauf. Coach: Intikhab Alam

Score first

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Marc-Vivien Foe during the semi-final against Colombia.

If the first French victory confirmed their pre-eminence in international football, the second softened the blow of a disastrous World Cup defence the previous year that culminated in a first-round exit.

FIFA changed the Confederations Cup frequency from biennial to four-yearly and the trophy returned to Brazil in 2005 after they ripped fierce South American rivals Argentina to shreds with a 4-1 final scolding.

Adriano was the destroyer-in-chief, opening and closing the goal account with Kaka and Ronaldinho also on target before Pablo Aimar pulled one back in a Frankfurt final that almost did not take place because of torrential rain.



Serbian star Novak Djokovic makes a forehand return against USA's Mardy Fish in their Wimbledon third round match in London on Saturday.

ECB boost for Pakistan

CRICKET

CRICINFO, undated

Pakistan and Australia will play two Tests and two Twenty20 internationals in England next July, after the England & Wales Cricket Board reached a staging agreement with their Pakistani counterparts.

"We've reached a contractual agreement with the PCB, although the nature of those details remains confidential at the moment for obvious reasons," an ECB spokesman told Cricinfo. "We haven't agreed on the venues yet, that will have to be determined by the Major Match Group, but clearly we will want to do that as soon as practically possible so that we can market the games."

The decision follows hot on the heels of Pakistan's superb showing in the World Twenty20, in which they beat Sri Lanka in the final at Lord's, having been supported throughout the tournament by arguably the most vociferous and passionate fans in the country. With virtually no prospect of cricket returning to Pakistan in the near future after the terrorist attack on the Sri Lanka team bus at Lahore in March, England promises to provide the exiled team with the perfect home from home.

"The Pakistan team performed outstandingly well in the World T20 tournament in England and were worthy world champions," said the ECB chairman, Giles Clarke. "The passion of the support for their team in England demonstrated why this country is an ideal venue for these matches against Australia."

"The warm relations between our two Boards has developed further under the leadership of the current PCB Chairman Ijaz Butt, with whom I enjoy an excellent working relationship, and ECB is delighted to support Pakistan in staging these matches."

For the final of the World Twenty20 at Lord's, the vast majority of the fans in the stadium were Pakistani, and according to Keith Bradshaw, MCC's chief executive, the atmosphere they

created was "electric". He was very hopeful that the experience of that match would persuade the Major Match Group that Lord's is the logical venue to stage such a game.

"I think we've said all along we're right behind the concept of neutral Tests," said Bradshaw. "We are the home of cricket and so our doors are open. We are very keen to stage the match and we'll be bidding hard to stage a Test."

"When Pakistan were here for the final the atmosphere was electric, as it was the week before when India were here. I know that Tests in London are still very strong in terms of attendance, both here and at The Oval, and to keep Test cricket as the pinnacle of the game it would be a logical place to stage such a match."

Another venue with strong claims to hosting a Test is Headingley, given the size of the Pakistani population in and around Leeds and Bradford. "We feel that all of the venues, given our demographic and track record in staging matches, we'd be very well placed and would make Pakistan feel at home," Stewart Regan, Yorkshire's chief executive, told Cricinfo.

"Nothing has changed since the previous discussions in the media several weeks ago. We have put our hat in the ring and said we would be very interested in talking to the ECB and PCB about staging one of the Test matches."

Regardless of the enthusiastic response to the news, there remain several hurdles to be overcome before the series can be set in stone, not least the thorny issue of TV rights. In November 2008, the PCB agreed a US\$140.5 million five-year television contract with Taj Entertainment Network (Ten Sports), with a clause that enabled series to take place at neutral venues in the event of an adverse security situation. It remains to be seen whether BSKB, who hold the rights to England home series, will contest the staging of such a contest on their turf.

The ECB and PCB also confirmed that England will host Pakistan for four Tests, five ODIs and two T20Is in August and September of next year.

Cisse signs

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club's supporters at the airport.

"I am very enthusiastic from the welcome and I have not witnessed anything like it in my life. I really didn't expect nor imagine it," Cisse said of the turnout.

The Cisse family will stay in Greece until Sunday in the presidential suite of one of Athens' most expensive seaside hotels.

They will return to Manchester to pick up their personal belongings and return to Greece permanently.

Cisse will then join the pre-season training camp of Panathinaikos in Switzerland sometime next week.

Early Friday Cisse successfully passed a medical examination by the Panathinaikos medical team and was taken to a tour of the club's facilities.

when he joined Barcelona - he had helped Sevilla win two editions of the UEFA Cup one European Supercup, one King's Cup and one Spanish Supercup.

Happy to have gone from substitute to hero with Brazil in less than five minutes, Dani Alves vows to keep fighting for a place in the starting line-up, even if he has to play as a left-back.

"I am here to help with whatever's needed. I have already played in other positions. What I want to do is be in the national team."

The only thing that upsets Alves right now is that he misses his family: his wife Dinorah and his children Vitoria and Daniel Junior - whose name he has tattooed on his chest, as was apparent when he celebrated his Confederations Cup goal.

"I hope to be reunited with my family again soon so I can celebrate the title with them," he said.

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"I did not see the US play against Spain, but we will be watching the game to prepare for Sunday."

Alves admitted that the USA win had taught his side a lesson.

"In a tournament like this, every team will have their chances," he said.

"Spain's game served as a lesson for us before we took on South Africa, and it will also serve as a lesson for us ahead of Sunday's final."

Despite having seen his side struggle to unlock South Africa, Dunga is expected to send out much the same team with Luis Fabiano up front and Kaka and Robinho tucked in behind him.

With Lucio, Maicon, Luisao and Andre Santos holding the back line and Felipe Melo, Ramires and Gilberto Silva operating in midfield the United States will have their workout out.

Bradley will once again be heavily reliant on experienced LA Galaxy attacker Landon Donovan controlling the game in the middle, while Clint Dempsey and Jozy Altidore will need to make the most of any chances that come their way up front.

Match closer than we had thought: Dhoni

CRICKET

CRICINFO, undated

MS Dhoni, the Indian captain, has said the first ODI against West Indies was closer than it looked despite the visitors' 20-run win.

"Most of the guys thought that we have won the game when they were seven wickets down but it was a mistake and hopefully we won't repeat that," Dhoni said. "It was more close than thought." India scored 339, largely owing to Yuvraj Singh's 102-ball 131.

West Indies lost their seventh wicket in the 40th over and needed 88 off the final ten. They scored 43 in the next five overs but lost David Bernard. Denesh Ramdin and Suleiman Benn scored 20 off two overs, which meant West Indies needed 25 off 18 balls to take the series lead. It was when the two batsmen fell within four balls of each other that a win looked highly unlikely. Ashish Nehra, playing his comeback game, took the crucial wickets of Bernard and Ramdin. "It was a gamble. We were thinking of giving that over to an offspinner or a pacer. Finally we chose a pacer as the ball

was getting reverse-swing," Dhoni said.

West Indies captain Chris Gayle said his team should have capitalised on the good start. "We came close and the effort can't be faulted for the way we went about it," Gayle said. "We batted well. Darren [Bravo] who was making debut was also impressive. Shiv [Chanderpaul] played a top innings at the top. I think if we had won the toss we would have batted first because it is a flat track and the wicket seemed a bit dry."

Both Dhoni and Gayle gave credit to Yuvraj for India's victory. Dhoni said Yuvraj had matured as a batsman over the last two years. "We rely a lot on him. He gets big runs for us in the middle order," Dhoni said. "Once he sets in, you hope for a big score. That's what he's doing. Once he's set in, he always gives us a good score with a very good strike rate."

Gayle said once Yuvraj could be very dangerous once he was settled. "Yuvraj batted really well and set up a good innings for his team - on a small outfield and flat track it was difficult to contain him out there when he was on the go," Gayle said. "You have to give credit to the way Yuvraj bat-

ted. He started really slow but that goes to show the power of Yuvraj."

The second ODI is on Sunday at the same venue.

Teletalk cricket

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Khagrachhari

Mohalchhara Aparajita Club secured a victory by seven runs over Chhoto Nala Adarsha Club in the Teletalk Cricket Tournament at the Khagrachhari Government High School yesterday.

Mohalchhara rode on Thunui Marma's 41 to score 135 all out in 26.1 over out of their stipulated 30 overs.

Anil Chakma of Chhoto Nala Adarsha Club damaged the top order of Mohalchhara Aparajita Club by picking up 4 wickets for 18 runs.

In reply, Chhoto Nala were bundled out for 128 runs in 29.1 over with its middle order batsman Mongshanue Marma scoring 29 runs.

Kamal Chakma of Mohalchhara picked up 3 wickets and secured the victory.

Thunui Marma of Mohalchhara was adjudged man of the match for his 41.

India clinch classic

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in the 34th over, and the remaining West Indies batsmen all came and treated the crowd to all too brief innings.

Earlier, when Yuvraj entered, India had stumbled to 32 for two in the eighth over, following the dismissals of Gautam Gambhir for 13 in the fifth over and Rohit Sharma for four in the eighth.

But Yuvraj joined Karthik, and the left-hander treated the modest crowd to a breath-taking array of strokes to reach his hundred from 88 balls, when he steered Taylor to third man for a single.

He added 135 for the third wicket with Karthik, who was caught behind off Dave Bernard Jr. in the 29th over.

Yuvraj reached 50 from 55 balls, when he turned a delivery from West Indies captain Chris Gayle into square leg for two, and then dominated an 86-run, fourth-wicket stand with Dhoni.

Yuvraj indulged himself during the Batting Power Play that spanned the 34th and 38th overs, when he smashed two fours and six sixes, as India added 62 runs.

The 37th over was particularly memorable for Yuvraj, when he struck Taylor for two sixes - over mid-wicket and long-off - in an over that cost 21.

But Yuvraj was slightly hobbled by a Taylor yorker, and eventually tamely surrendered, when he was caught behind off Dwayne Bravo in the 39th over glancing a leg-side delivery.

After his dismissal, India made steady, if not spectacular progress in the closing overs through Dhoni, Pathan, and Harbhajan Singh.

Their final total was the highest in an ODI at the ground eclipsing Pakistan's 349 all out against Zimbabwe in the 2007 World Cup.

The highest target successfully chased at the venue is South Africa's 255 for two against West Indies four years ago.

Bravo captured two for 66 from his 10 overs to be the best of the West Indies' bowlers.

SCOREBOARD

Scoreboard of the opening one-day interna-

tional between India and West Indies on Friday at Sabina Park:

INDIA

Karthik c Ramdin b Bernard 67

Gambhir c Bravo b Taylor 13

Sharma c Bravo b Baker 4

Yuvraj c Ramdin b Bravo 131

Dhoni run out 41

Jadeja c Ramdin b Bravo 0

Y Pathan not out

Harbhajan not out 21

Extras: (b-1, lb-8, w-10, nb-3) 22

Total: (For 6 wks in 50 overs) 339

Did not bat: I Sharma, RP Singh, Nehra.

Fall of wickets: 1-25, 2-32, 3-167, 4-253, 5-253, 6-298

Bowler

O M R W

Taylor 10 1 74 1

Baker 9 0 62 1

Bravo 10 0 66 2

Bernard 8 0 50 1

Benn 10 0 50 0

Gayle 3 0 28 0

WEST INDIES

Gayle c Harbhajan b Nehra 37

Morton c Dhoni b Pathan 42

Sarwan run out 45

Chanderpaul c Jadeja b Pathan 63

Bravo c R Sharma b I Sharma 8

D Bravo c RP Singh b Harbhajan 19

Taylor lbw b Pathan 21

Ramdin c Harbhajan b Nehra 29

Bernard c R Sharma b Nehra 19

Benn b RP Singh 7

Baker not out 0

Extras: (b-4, lb-4, w-19, nb-2) 29

Total: (All out in 48.1 overs) 319

Fall of wickets: 1-65, 2-100, 3-151, 4-188, 5-224, 6-241, 7-250, 8-294, 9-318

Bowler

O M R W

RP Singh 7 0 44 1

Nehra 7.1 1 49 3

I Sharma 5 0 38 1

Jadeja 7 1 34 0

Y Pathan 8 0 56 3

Harbhajan 10 0 56 1

Yuvraj 4 0 34 0

Result: India won by 20 runs.

Man-of-the-match: Yuvraj Singh

Umpires: N Llong (ENG), N. Malcolm

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS 37 Starbucks order

1 "Family" —

5 Revlon rival

9 Scoundrel

12 Relaxation

13 Diner's card

14 Wish otherwise

15 Grouped together

17 Coulter or Curry

18 Nevada city

19 Vile

21 Eco-friendly

24 Unuttered "alas"

25 Incessant

26 Encased, in a way

30 Hockey venue

31 Picture puzzle

32 Geologic period

33 Sank, as a billiard ball

35 "Hey, you!"

36 Twitches

DOWN

1 Shortest of the 12 (Abbr.)

2 Corn spike

3 "Born in the —" events

4 Edict

5 Congregation's cry

6 Kill a bill

7 Inseparable

8 Pests

9 It often involves a dummy

10 One of the kin

11 Say it isn't so

16 Under-standing

20 Census statistic

21 Stage-hand

22 Puerto —

23 November

24 Missile type

26 "West Side Story" gang

27 Honest politician?

28 Formerly, formerly

29 Appointment

31 Honor

32 Earth Day, in a way

34 DIY buy

35 Progenitor

37 Albanian money

38 It ain't worth a nickel

39 Verve

40 Multi-colored

41 Gross

44 Roulette bet