

NATIONS CUP Final round starts today

SPORTS REPORTER

The eight-team final round of the Grameen-Danone Nations Cup football competition kicks off at the Bangabandhu National Stadium today.

Seven zonal champions - Chittagong, Narail, Khulna, Chapainawabganj, Lalmonirhat, Narayanganj, Gazipur DFAs and automatic qualifier BFF Development squad will play in the final round.

The final will be held on July 7 at the same venue and the champion team will represent Bangladesh in the Danone Nations Cup Football Finals to be held on October 9-11 at Sao Paulo in Brazil.

A draw ceremony was held yesterday at the BFF conference prior to the knockout basis final phase and Kazi Nabil Ahmed, chairman of the tournament committee and vice president of Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF), disclosed the details.

BFF members Fazlur
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National shooting

UNB, Dhaka

The 5th South Asian Shooting Championship was inaugurated at the BKSP shooting range yesterday.

A total of 120 shooters from India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Bhutan and host Bangladesh are up with guns to compete in 12 events of the championship that begins Sunday.

Army Chief General Mohammad Abdul Mubin formally inaugurated the meet as chief guest in the afternoon.

EVENT SCHEDULE

July 5: 50m pistol and 10m air rifle (men's).

July 6: 50m rifle prone (men's), 25m pistol (women's), 10m air rifle (women's).

July 7: 50m rifle prone (women's), 10m air pistol (men's), skeet 75 shot competition.

July 8: 50m rifle 3x40 (men's), 25m standard pistol (men's), 10m air pistol (women's) and skeet 50 shot.

July 9: 50m rifle 3x20 (women's).



Did U Know?

Wimbledon women's singles and men's doubles events began in 1884 seven years after men's singles.



STAR Sports

Wimbledon Championships
Women's Singles Final
Live from 7:30pm

TEN Sports

Sri Lanka v Pakistan
First Test, Day 1
Live from 11:00am



TALK TURKEY



Sir Alex Ferguson

(Man United manager)
"Cristiano Ronaldo has been a marvellous player for Manchester United. His six years at Old Trafford have seen him develop into the best footballer in the world."



PHOTO: AFP

Swiss world number two Roger Federer jumps to play a smash during his Wimbledon semifinal against German Tommy Haas at the All England Club yesterday. Federer won 7-6, 7-5, 6-3.

Ricky seeks elusive glory

Cricket

AFP, London

Australia captain Ricky Ponting heads into the upcoming Ashes series against England looking to erase the one blot on a CV filled with outstanding achievements.

Ponting, one of the most talented batsmen of his and many another generation, has yet to captain his country to Ashes glory in England.

He was in charge when Australia lost their first Ashes series in nearly 20 years when England won 2-1 on home soil four years ago.

"I was disappointed to lose the Ashes in 2005 as the entire touring group were," said Ponting. "I've been lucky to play in an era of Australian cricket that's been very dominant."

"One thing I haven't been able to achieve as captain is to win an Ashes series in England and I'll make sure that I get that point across to the rest of the guys."

Will he ever.
The fact the Tasmanian was in charge when Australia regained the Ashes 5-0 'Down Under' in 2006/07 won't lessen his determination to do well now.

His captaincy skills have been repeatedly 'bagged' with former Australia fast bowler Jeff Thomson stinging in his criticisms again this week.

But Thomson also said Australia had the better line-up and that may yet prove to be true

even though they are now without retired stars Shane Warne, Glenn McGrath, Justin Langer, Matthew Hayden and Adam Gilchrist.

The loss of leg-spin great Warne and accurate paceman McGrath, who between them took 49 wickets in the last Ashes series, has made life harder for Ponting in the field, as it would for any captain.

Even so he still led Australia to a Test series win in South Africa after the Proteas had had to perform brilliantly to win the preceding series in Australia.

They don't have those legends they had but the guys that have come in have done a good job and they will be determined to make their own mark in Australian cricket," said England captain Andrew Strauss.

In left-arm quick Mitchell Johnson and the emerging Peter Siddle, Australia have a lively pair of fast bowlers.

Meanwhile the way veteran quick Brett Lee reverse-swung the ball to take five wickets against England Lions at Worcester on Thursday suggested a skill that proved their undoing in 2005 has been mastered by at least one Australian.

But the question is have Australia's batsmen got better at playing it? Left-hander Gilchrist was driven to distraction by Andrew Flintoff's bowling in 2005 and Australia's top order contains several of his fellow southpaws.

However, taking 20 wickets in a Test has proved a problem for England in recent times.

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Murali blow for SL

1st Test against Pakistan today

Cricket

AFP, Galle

Muttiah Muralidaran was on Friday ruled out of the first Test against Pakistan with a knee injury, dealing a huge blow to Sri Lanka's bid to win the emotionally-charged series.

The spin wizard hurt his patella tendon during training on Thursday and will sit out of the opening game of the three-Test series starting at the Galle International Stadium on Saturday.

The series opener will be the first Test match between the two nations since gunmen fired on the Sri Lankan team bus during a visit to Pakistan on March 3.

Sri Lankan captain Kumar Sangakkara said he was hopeful that Muralidaran, who boasts world records for his 770 Test and 505 one-day wickets, will be available for the second match from July 12.

"He was doing his warm-

ups and he suddenly felt a bit of discomfort in his right knee," said Sangakkara. "The scan report showed a slight tear."

"The risk of him tearing his tendon in the first Test is very high. I don't think we want to risk him getting injured for a long time just for the sake of

one Test. Hopefully he will be fit by the second Test."

Seven Sri Lankan cricketers were injured and eight local securitymen were killed in the March attack in the city of Lahore that forced the cricket world to abandon Pakistan as

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PHOTO: AFP

Sri Lanka batsman Tillakaratne Dilshan catches a ball during a practice session at the Galle International Cricket Stadium in Galle yesterday.

Federer on the cusp of history

US's Andy through

AFP, London



Roger Federer reached a record 20th Grand Slam final and a seventh straight Wimbledon title match with a 7-6, 7-5, 6-3 win over German veteran Tommy Haas in the semifinals on Friday.

Five-time Wimbledon champion Federer, who is chasing a record 15th Grand Slam crown, now tackles Andy Roddick of the United States in Sunday's final.

Roddick beat Andy Murray of Great Britain 6-4, 4-6, 7-6, 7-6 to reach the final.

Watched by Grand Slam greats Bjorn Borg and Rod Laver, comfortably installed in the Royal Box, the world number two put on a magnificent show of serving against the German 31-year-old, not giving up a single break point.

"Tommy played great so I knew that there was a danger. I'm happy with my performance and it's unbelievable to be in another final," said Federer.

"I have had a lot of pressure over the years but I am looking forward to another great match and a chance to get into the history books."

Federer said he was looking ahead to the challenge of the final.

"I have had great matches with Roddick. You can never underestimate him with that serve," he said.

"Murray's at home. My record against him is not that good. He's shown over the last 18 months that he can be a Grand Slam contender."

The opening set on Friday was dominated by serve, but the Swiss second seed was the strongest in the tiebreak.

He went to three set points when Haas unleashed a loose forehand with the world number two wrapping up the set when the German, stranded behind the baseline, pushed a backhand into the net.

It was the dream start for the five-time champion after the nightmare beginning he suffered against the same opponent at the French Open last month when he had

to recover from losing the first two sets in the fourth round.

Former world number two Haas, playing in his first Wimbledon semifinal, had to save a set point, which was also the first break point of the match, at 4-5 in the second set.

But the Swiss broke through in the 12th game for a two-sets lead when another Haas forehand went long.

Haas cracked for the last time in the eighth game of the third set when he netted an easy approach having saved four break points.

Federer then wrapped up the semifinal in just over two hours on his first match point with a spectacular, athletic smash.

In Friday's second semifinal, third seed Murray will be looking to become the first British men's finalist since Bunny Austin in 1938. Fred Perry was the last British men's champion in 1936.

Roddick, the sixth seed and 2003 US Open winner, was runner-up here in 2004 and 2005, losing both finals to Federer.

Family upset at stadium renaming

CU CORRESPONDENT

Family members of Birsreshtha Shaheed Ruhul Amin protested the renaming of the cricket stadium in the port city.

Recently the name of the Birsreshtha Shaheed Ruhul Amin Stadium, commonly known as Chittagong Divisional Stadium, has been changed to Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium following a government directive.

Birsreshtha Ruhul Amin's daughters Fatema Amin, Nurjahan Amin and other family members demanded restoration of the name while speaking at a press conference at the Chittagong Press Club yesterday.

They also sought immediate interference of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina into the matter to uphold honour of the freedom fighter, especially when it was named after a Birsreshtha, the highest state-honour for the martyred freedom fighters.

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Zia maintains solo lead

SPORTS REPORTER

GM Ziaur Rahman won his fifth round board against Mohammad Hasan Emam to maintain the solo lead in the 35th Mercantile Bank National Chess Championship at the federation hall-room yesterday.

Zia played with white pieces against Pirc Defense of Hasan and continued with the miscellaneous system to win on the 36th move and ensure a maximum five points.

GM Reefat Bin Sattar and Golam Mostafa Bhuiyan followed the leader with four points each. Reefat beat Mahtabuddin Ahmed and Mostafa got a walkover against GM Niaz Murshed.

In the 5th round FM Mohammad Javed stunned his team mate GM Enamul Hossain Rajib. Javed played with black pieces against Giucco Piano Main Line of Rajib and won after 28 moves.

Teletalk cricket

OUR CORRESPONDENT,
Khagrachari

Khaborpuria Samobai Samity posted a five-wicket victory over Monpura Star Club when the Teletalk cricket tournament resumed yesterday, after three days break, due to heavy rain at the Khagrachhari Government High School ground.

Monpura Star Club were bundled out 119 runs in 28.4 over with Promiz making 21.

Bibash Chakma claimed four wickets for 18 runs while Alaxy Chakma, Jibon Chakma picked up two wickets each.

In reply, Khaborpuria Samobai Samity reached the target of 120 for five wickets in 23.1 overs. Ajit Chakma made 31 and Kamrul Hasan added 28.

Ruhul Amin captured two wickets.

All-sister finale

AFP, London



Venus and Serena Williams clash in a fourth all-sister Wimbledon final on Saturday determined to prove that their domination of the event is not a backward step for the sport's future welfare.

Despite 128 players starting out in the first round last week, the two Americans are once again left to contest the final for the second successive year and for the eighth time in a Grand Slam final.

Venus won last year to clinch her fifth Wimbledon title and a seventh major; Serena was the champion in 2002 and 2003 and has captured 10 Grand Slam trophies in all.

Despite the success, Russia's Dinara Safina, still without a major, and who was humiliated 6-1, 6-0 by Venus in the most one-sided Wimbledon semifinal in 40 years on Thursday, remains a contentious world number one.

The sisters, who are level 10-10 in career meetings, are desperate to put the controversy over rankings to one side and put on a competitive Centre Court showpiece.

"I think women's tennis is fantastic. I would never be down on it. I happen to have enor-

mous respect for Dinara," said Venus after her 51-minute demolition of the Russian.

"I'm not the number one seed so I shouldn't be expected to win but I have more experience playing on grass courts."

Venus, bidding to win a hat-trick of Wimbledon singles titles, is more concerned about quelling the competitive instincts of her sister who saved a match point in her three-set semifinal win over Elena Dementieva.

At 2hr 49min, it was the longest women's semifinal in history.

Venus recalled the first time she witnessed Serena's battling qualities when she was still a rookie on the tour back in 1998.

"We were playing in Sydney at White City and she was playing Lindsay Davenport. She was down 1-6, 2-5 and I'll never forget that she came back and won," said Venus.

"It was so intense. I just learned so much from that, her fight. I think that actually had a huge impression on my career, that one incident."

As always the final will be closely scrutinised for its competitive edge.

Twelve months ago, Dementieva, who had been defeated by Venus in the semi-final,

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PHOTO: AFP

WHO YOU BETTING ON? Sisters Serena (R) and Venus Williams speak during changeover of their doubles match against Cara Black and Lizel Huber in Wimbledon yesterday.

Caps before cash: Gavaskar

Cricket

AFP, New Delhi

Young Indian cricketers should focus on representing their country instead of being lured by the cash-rich Indian Premier League (IPL), legendary opener Sunil Gavaskar has warned.

Mentoring youngsters is vital especially in the age of lucrative Twenty20 tournaments, Gavaskar said while delivering the inaugural Dilip Sardesai lecture in Mumbai in memory of his former Test teammate.

"Players in the age group of 19-22 are going the wrong way. Younger players get carried away by fame, publicity and success," Gavaskar was quoted as saying by the Indian Express on Friday.

"The worrying factor is far too many youngsters see the IPL as the be-all and end-all. This should not be the case since their ultimate goal should be earning the India cap."

The Twenty20 game has been rapidly growing in popularity in recent times, with the IPL offering lucrative contracts to Indian and foreign players.

India coach Gary Kirsten pointed the finger at the IPL for his team's ouster from the World Twenty20 in England last month, saying it had left players tired.

He said his team was physically and mentally unprepared to defend the title because of the players' IPL involvement.

India, who won the inaugural T20 Worlds in South Africa two years ago, lost all of their three Super Eight matches and were knocked out before the semi-finals.

Gavaskar, the first batsman to complete 10,000 Test runs, said players even skipped domestic matches to participate in the IPL.

"A lot of players miss out on domestic cricket before the IPL to avoid injuries. This is what we have to be very, very careful about," said Gavaskar, who is also a member of the IPL governing council.

The former India captain, who retired in 1987 with 10,122 runs in 125 Tests, said the players also needed to improve their on-field behaviour, especially when they score a century or grab a wicket.

"At times, players use abusive language when they should be acknowledging the applause of the crowd and their team-mates. These days, because of the (TV) replays, it is very easy to lip-read what they are saying," he said.

"Some of them react in macho-style. It's not necessary. (Sachin) Tendulkar and (Rahul) Dravid just look up toward the sky, thank the Lord and acknowledge the cheers from the dressing-room and the spectators."