

ATF U-14 tennis starts today

SPORTS REPORTER

Indian boys and girls will be playing as favourites when the Prime Bank ATF Under-14 Tennis Tournament gets underway at the National Tennis Complex in Ramna today.

A total of 44 players, 19 of them girls, from India, Indonesia, Hong Kong, Malaysia, Pakistan, Singapore, Sri Lanka, USA and hosts Bangladesh will take part in four events -- boys' singles and doubles, girls' singles and doubles.

India's Prajwal Dev, Malhotra Pranav, Taher Kuwar Singh and Dhankar Shaurya have been rated top four seeds in the boys' singles while Dalal Sayesha of India, Ma Ka Man of Hong Kong, Upadhyaya Seeluee of India and Chia Ming Ming Joy of Singapore are the top seeds for the girls' singles, said the organisers at a press conference at the Bangladesh Tennis Federation yesterday.

Highest 19 participants including seven girls from Bangladesh will participate in the tournament. Mohammad Rustam Ali, Mohammad Jamil Bhuiyan, Biplob Ram and Delwar Hossain have good prospect of advancing into the quarterfinals in the boys' singles, hoped tournament director Ahmed Ziaur Rahman.

He also informed a few girls are taking part for the first time in an international tournament and they expect good results from them.

The organisers also said that the second-phase of the tournament would be held at Bangladesh Krira Shikha Protisthan in Savar over October 16-20.

Prime Bank, as sponsors of the event, are providing Tk 6 lakh while the Asian Tennis Federation gave 1,500 dollars to organise the tournament. Foreign Minister Dr Dipu Moni will inaugurate three-day meet as chief guest.

Bangladesh Tennis Federation president Shahriar Alam, MP, general secretary Istiaq Ahmed Curren, Prime Bank's managing director M Ehsanul Haq and senior vice-president and head of corporate and public affairs relationship division Ferdousi Sultana spoke at the press conference.

Bahrain held

FROM PAGE 20 Mohammed Salmeen and a minute later Mohammed Hubail shot over the bar after a series of quick-fire passes.

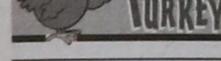
Another chance came and went in the 63rd minute when Fouzi Aaish charged into the penalty area from the left and did well to beat Chris Killen but his shot was brilliantly saved by Paston.

Bahrain continued to persevere in front of a packed house of over 30,000 fans and pinned the Kiwis to their own half.

They came by yet another chance when they earned a free kick on the edge of the penalty box after Aaish was brought down by Ben Sigmund. But Adnan wasted the golden opportunity as his shot sailed wide off the far post.

Two minutes later the packed house was stunned into silence when Kiwi substitute Chris Wood scored after a swift counter-attack but he was clearly off-side much to the relief of the home team and fans.

Bahrain should have sealed the match in the 75th minute when Salmeen again split the Kiwi defence with a well-measured through pass into the penalty area to Isa.

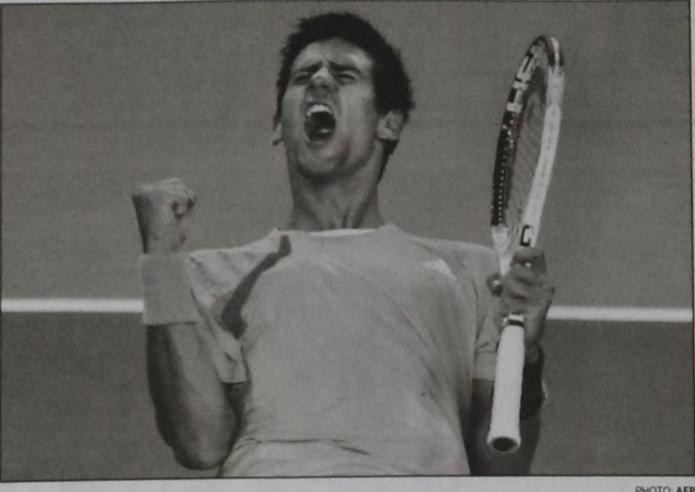


Talk Turkey



Carlo Ancelotti

(Chelsea manager) "Everyone here has a lot of affection for him. He did a great job here and everyone, even the players, are bound to him. That's very satisfying for a coach."



Novak Djokovic of Serbia celebrates after beating Marin Cilic of Croatia in the final of the China Open at the National Tennis Center in Beijing yesterday. Djokovic beat Cilic 6-2, 7-6.

China Open Djokovic's

Tennis

AFP, Beijing

Novak Djokovic captured his third ATP title of the year at the China Open on Sunday, outlasting giant killer Marin Cilic of Croatia in a blistering baseline battle, 6-2, 7-6 (7/4).

The Serbian second seed took advantage of a 90-minute rain delay, which came at 2-2 in the first set, coming back on centre court at the Beijing Olympics tennis venue with sharper ground strokes and well-placed serves.

The big-hitting Cilic -- who beat fourth seed Nikolay Davydenko and top seed Rafael Nadal en route to the final -- kept up a barrage of huge shots from the backcourt but Djokovic mixed up the pace to throw him off, forcing errors.

After holding serve to go up 3-2 in the first, Djokovic broke Cilic straight away and then a second time to take the set, with the 21-year-old Croatian the victim of two unlucky net cords in the final game.

In the second, Cilic -- a wild card entry here -- and the 22-year-old Serb traded breaks three times to force a tiebreak, with the Croatian failing to serve out the set twice.

Djokovic took control mid-tiebreak, winning a rally after Cilic slipped and fell to go up 4-2. The Serb closed it out on his second match point when the Croatian sent an inside-out forehand sailing wide.

Both players agreed that the light rain shower

had been a factor in the outcome of the final.

"I certainly played much better after the rain delay," said Djokovic, who went home with the 500,000-dollar winner's cheque. "I kind of got my nerves together... I was very fresh on the court after that."

"Even though it was a straight set win, it wasn't easy at all. Marin could have had at least a set under his belt," the Serb said, congratulating Cilic on a great week in Beijing.

The Croatian said he had trouble adjusting to the cooler temperatures and the slower on-court conditions after the break.

"I didn't find the right range. I was a little bit struggling with that," Cilic said.

"He was defending really well and so it was tough to get some free points. I think I didn't serve well today... In the crucial moments, he played well."

Djokovic, by reaching the final, is assured of taking over the world number three ranking on October 19, surpassing injured Scot Andy Murray. He has already qualified for the season-ending championship in London in November.

Both men will head straight to Shanghai for the next leg of the ATP Tour's swing through Asia. American twins Bob and Mike Bryan won the men's doubles final, defeating Andy Roddick and doubles specialist Mark Knowles in straight sets, 6-4, 6-2, for their sixth title of the year.

China's Peng Shuai and Taiwan's Hsieh Su-wei won the women's doubles title Saturday, beating Russia's Alla Kudryavtseva and Ekaterina Makarova, 6-3, 6-1.

Mohammedan prevail

FROM PAGE 17

the match in the tiebreaker as it turned into a game any side could win after the regulation time ended in a 1-1 draw.

Maruf's counterpart Riaz Biswas, however, was happy to see the way the players fought against their mighty opponents.

"The boys played as expected to keep Mohammedan at bay throughout the second half," Riaz said. "We were actually not defeated as the regulation time ended in a draw."

The game started 20 minutes late from scheduled time because the groundsman were busy rolling the pitch to make the surface even following heavy downpour in the past few days.

Mohammedan, who came into the game on the back of 19 goals in three outings, dominated the first half. Shuktara though had the first shot on target in the early exchanges as Mohammedan defender Saikat blocked it at the cost of a corner.

The defending champions, however, came close to taking the lead in the eighth minute when Nigerian Alamu Bukola Olalekan set up midfielder Mamunul Islam in front of open net, but the former Abahani man side-volleyed lamely when a more composed touch was needed.

Shuktara goalkeeper Al Amin foiled two efforts from Christina Emeka and Bukola, but he finally failed to stop Emily, who cleverly tapped a Bukola cross in the 25th minute to raise his goal tally to seven in four matches.

After going down, Shuktara

bit back with crisp passing and better movement and came close to equalising the margin twice, but Guinean Iddi Batambuze drove wide in both occasions.

After resumption, Shuktara stepped up the attack bringing on Shohel who substituted Iddi and Mehdi Hasan Tapu darted into the danger zone, but his shaky shot went straight to Mohammedan's keeper Paul seven minutes into the second half.

Shuktara went all out to keep Mohammedan at bay and it was hard to recognise that Mohammedan were playing after their brilliant performance in the group stage.

Mohammedan brought three changes in the second half, but it had hardly any impact on the team. However, Bukola should have doubled the Mohammedan margin when he ran down from the left to drive a shot wide with only goalkeeper Al Amin to beat in the 56th minute.

Referee Hannan Miron seemingly turned down a penalty appeal from Shuktara in the 70th minute, but he did not hesitate to award a penalty shot following a handball by Mohammedan defender and Liton, the former Brothers playmaker, converted the spot kick to level the margin and take the match into the shoot-out where the Black and White's prevailed.

TEAMS: MOHAMMEDAN: James Paul, Aram Aziz (Shakil Ahmed), Wali Faisal, Saikat (Mamun Islam), Ariful Islam, Mamunul Islam, Zahid Hossain (Nasiruddin).

Shuktara

English youths get

FROM PAGE 17

target this time is to win the Test and the one-day series," said the champion batsman of the country.

"We've played four or five matches against this team. Their preparation is better than ours. But as we will be playing on home soil we are confident we can do well," added Minhazul.

The inclusion of seven one-day games in the series was understandable as the Under-19 World Cup is knocking on the door. The tournament is scheduled to be held in New Zealand/January next year.

Minhazul also talked about his team's prospect in the World Cup. "We've got little time to prepare for the World Cup. Let's say we've done 75-80 per cent

of preparation. Hopefully, players will get prepared before the tournament begins," he said.

Bangladesh were eliminated from the quarterfinals in the last two World Cups. But Minhazul hoped that his boys would do better this time.

"Consistency is very important to succeed, but we lack that at all levels. Our target is to stay in the top four first, then we will see if we can get farther," he observed.

Bangladesh will also host Zimbabwe after this series. Reflecting on his team's strengths and weaknesses Minhazul said: "We've got two leg-spinners in the team which is very good for us. But our batting is a bit weak."

Somerset win thriller

Cricket

CRICINFO, undated

"I can't believe I have done that," said an ecstatic Alfonso Thomas, who hit two boundaries in the last three deliveries of a thriller to steal and seal victory for Somerset in the Champions League encounter at the Rajiv Gandhi International Stadium in Hyderabad on Saturday.

In a rollercoaster of a match, Somerset just about managed to hold their nerves courtesy a 50-run partnership for the eighth wicket between Thomas and James Hildreth to get past the line off the last ball of the match. The equation came down to five runs from three balls with one wicket left when Thomas sliced a full toss from Scott Styris -- who had taken two wickets in the final over -- to the deep point boundary before bringing up the win with another carve over point.

It was a strange but extremely interesting chase, and one that seemed to detail at various points as wickets fell at regular intervals. Crucially, Somerset managed to find the odd big hit that always kept them in the hunt. Rain intervened for a while, forcing the captains to regularly check the Duckworth-Lewis equation, and the drama increased when Fidel Edwards was prevented from completing his last two overs after he slipped in two beamers.

When the seventh wicket fell, Somerset still needed 55 from 37 balls but Thomas and Hildreth biffed a few boundaries against the spinners, who had done so well till then to get Deccan ahead, to get the equation down to 31 from 24. Deccan attacked with their seamers and Hildreth and Thomas started dealing in singles to slowly push Somerset ahead. The equation

came down to nine from 10 balls after Thomas paddle-swept RP Singh over the short fine-leg fielder. When a yorker ran for three leg byes it seemed the game was over but there was one final twist left in this enthralling game.

With five needed from the last over, Styris bowled Hildreth first ball and then removed Max Waller off the third, but crucially for Somerset, Thomas had crossed over. And he finished the game in style.

Somerset did well in the end to get past the line but one sensed a bit of nerves in their approach to the chase especially after the raucous home crowd got into the game. Marcus Trescothick, playing his first game out of England in a while, fell after offering a fleeting glimpse of his talent with two crunchy upper cuts but some of the shots that followed his exit were almost needless: Zander de Bruyn attempted a thrash over covers and edged behind, Craig Kieswetter holed out to long-on, Peter Trego swung to deep midwicket, and even Justin Langer swatted a full delivery from well outside off to mid-on.

Not that they could have done it in singles but the run rate was never so daunting that they had to go for desperate hits. Once the top order fell, the bottom half swung their bat but lost wickets regularly till Thomas and Hildreth chose to stamp their presence in the game. The platform was laid earlier by their bowlers, with Thomas playing his part with an economical spell. VVS Laxman starred for Deccan with an uncharacteristic knock but they lost the plot in the middle and needed Venugopal Rao to push them just past 150.

You don't use adjectives like hammer and clobber to describe shots from Laxman but tonight he almost batted with a touch of violence. He charged down the

track to the seamers, cleared the front foot and heaved across the line, moved outside leg and flat-batted length deliveries back past the startled bowlers and even tried an ugly hoick across the line.

That last shot captured his mood perfectly: Laxman edged a hoick to the fine-leg boundary and sported a lovely sheepish smile. It was exactly the sentiment that many of the viewers would have felt while watching this uncharacteristic innings. We might never know whether it was merely Laxman adjusting his game to this format after his county stint or whether it was about proving a point for being stripped of his IPL captaincy and dropped from many games in the last IPL. Whatever the intent was, it suited Deccan tonight as they got off to a racy start, but they were let down by the other batsmen.

Adam Gilchrist unfurled a few big hits but top-edged a pull shot and Andrew Symonds holed out to long-on. Laxman too slowed down a touch before he fell, going for yet another heave across the line and the scoring almost came to a pause as Trego starred with his economical medium pace and de Bruyn too did his bit to apply the squeeze.

Deccan crawled from 86 for 3 in 10 overs to 99 for 4 from 15 overs as Rohit Sharma and Styris tried to rebuild the innings all over again but both fell in quick succession and Deccan was restricted to a below-par score on a batting surface. None of the IPL teams have won a game so far in the Champions League Twenty20 and Somerset made sure the script didn't change on Saturday night.

BRIEFSCORES Somerset 157 for 9 (Thomas 30 not out, Hildreth 25) beat Deccan Chargers 153 (Laxman 46) by one wicket.

U-16 booters end qualifiers with defeat

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh under-16 booters squandered chance after chance as they went down to Chinese Taipei 1-2 at the Pannad Stadium yesterday to bow out of the AFC U 16 Championship Qualifiers.

Bangladesh were the better side on the field with little to show for it. They had the first opportunity on the 14th minute when Sifat found an open goal only to put his shot wide. And that missed opportunity cost them dearly as Tsai hung Wei found himself unmarked in the D box on the 19th minute and slotted home to put his team in front.

Falling behind, Bangladesh went in to all-out attack and on the 35th minute Nasir got one-on-one with the opposition goalkeeper, yet failed to score. In the second half, Bangladesh pressed hard for an equaliser. Bangladesh midfielders took grip of the game and they were eventually rewarded when in the 80th minute a cross from Anik Bormon, parried by the Taipei goal-keeper, found Soheli's head and they drew level. Bangladesh kept on surging after that goal. But on the 83rd minute against run of play, Lee Meng Che got a free ball in the Bangladesh box and scored to make it 2-1. Bangladesh kept searching for another equaliser, but that wasn't to come.

A dejected coach B A Zubair Nipu said "We played the match very well. But suddenly we lost the grip of the match. Players gave their full effort. We missed so many chances and that's why the result was not in our favour".

Bangladesh finished fourth among five teams from the group with four points.

Blessing in disguise

Cricket

CRICINFO, undated

Australia fast bowler Mitchell Johnson believes the problems that derailed the first half of his Ashes summer have made him a better player. Johnson suffered serious lows in England -- losing his accuracy, having his place under threat and a family dispute which became public -- but after the ICC Cricketer of the Year award and a starring role in Australia's Champions Trophy triumph he was confident of where he was.

"I built it up really high. Obviously it's a big deal being the Ashes, but I probably built it up too much and got too excited about it all early," Johnson said. "I didn't take in the fact that their home crowd was right behind them all the way and I wasn't used to that feeling, and obviously taking on the role as leader of the attack all got to me a little bit."

Happy to be back in Perth after a long time away from home, Johnson said the lows experienced in England made him stronger. "I'm glad I recovered from it. It has definitely helped and is something you

needed to go through. It was a learning experience for me."

Johnson, 27, reflected on the Champions Trophy win as a happy occasion for a side that struggled in the one-day game. "Sitting at the end of the game we felt pretty good about ourselves. Obviously we did lose the Ashes, but it was very fulfilling for us to win that tournament. Everyone was pretty happy," he said. "I probably would (trade it for the Ashes) though. The big event for us was the Ashes, but you have to take each tournament as you go. We can't dwell on the Ashes, we've won the Champions Trophy and are very happy."

Johnson fought off stiff competition to take the Player of the Year award from fellow short-list nominees Gautam Gambhir and MS Dhoni, as well as England captain Andrew Strauss. During the voting period, Johnson played 17 Test matches, taking 80 wickets, which was easily the highest number by any Test bowler in the voting period. He also scored a total of 632 runs for Australia, including a century and three half-centuries, to register an average of 30.09. In 16 ODIs in that time he took 28 wickets at an average of 24.25 and an economy rate of 5.06.

NTMC seeks FROM PAGE 17 while Group A includes holders Maldives, India, Afghanistan and Nepal. Roy, also a BFF vice-president, said that the game's governing body will now decide when the third edition of B. League will start.

The B. League is scheduled to start after the conclusion of the ongoing Federation Cup.

Bangladesh

FROM PAGE 17

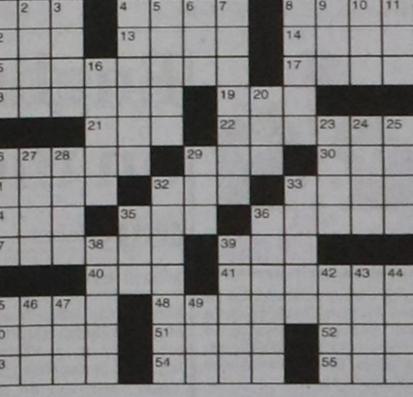
respectability to the total. But those efforts were far from enough as MCA raced home with five wickets in hand and a quarter of the innings left. Shahadat Hossain and Dollar Mahmud took two wickets each for the visiting side.

The tour, dogged so far by rain, saw Bangladesh A draw their first four-day match and lose the first ODI on Duckworth-Lewis method against the same opposition. The next two one-dayers were curtailed into T20 format, of which both teams have won one apiece.

Bangladesh A wrap up their tour with the second and final Twenty20 match at the same venue today.

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

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CRYPTOQUIP QIU QIXUU YXZIYUMEMLRQR TUXU YNMDQ QM UYQ Y WUYE QMLUQIUX TIUO RMWUNMCP RDCCUOEP ZXKUC "CKL KO!" Yesterday's Cryptoquip: A FEW FOLKS ARE STILL CLAIMING THAT THE CONGA DRUM IS NOT BROKEN, BUT I WOULDN'T BEAT ON IT! Today's Cryptoquip Clue: U equals E