



Did U Know?

Women's singles were added to the French Open tennis tournament in 1897. It was opened up to the best foreign players in 1925.



Sachin Tendulkar
(India's batting superstar)
"No regrets at all. Captaining is not about an individual but a team. Of course it was painful whenever the team lost but losing the 2007 World Cup was more disappointing."
On his two stints, which are widely viewed as disappointing, as national captain.



TEN Sports & SuperSport5
Pakistan v New Zealand
Second T20
Live from 11:00pm
SuperSport2
South Africa v England
First T20
Live from 11:00pm
ESPN
Sportscenter India
Sports News
Live at 9:30pm



PREMIER DIV CRICKET LEAGUE
Mohammedan v Gazi Tank
Venue: Sher-e-Bangla National Cricket Stadium
Surjo Torun v Partex
Venue: Fatullah Cricket Stadium
Abahani v Cricket Coaching School
Venue: BKSP-2
Bangladesh U-19 v Zimbabwe U-19
First Youth ODI
Venue: Khulna Divisional Stadium

LOCAL SNIPPETS

SPORTS REPORTER

Chittagong Area team emerged champions in the Bangladesh Army boxing competition which was concluded at the Shaheed Salahuddin Cantonment, Ghatail yesterday.

The winners won three gold, two silver and two bronze medals while Bogra Area team finished runners-up with two gold, four silvers and one bronze medal.

Md. Nazmus Shakib of Rangpur Area team was adjudged best boxer and in the new entry Md. Faisal Mollah of Savar Area team was adjudged best boxer.

Engineer-in-chief of Bangladesh Army Major General Hameed-Al-Hasan distributed the prizes among the winners as a chief guest.

RAPID CHESS
European Standard School (ESS) Rapid Chess Tournament will start today at the Bangladesh Chess Federation hall-room.

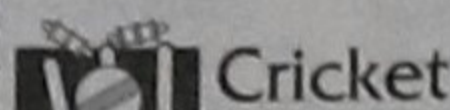
It's an open event and interested player can enroll their name on or before 2:30pm at the playing venue.

The tournament will be held in a seven Swiss-League system and cash prize money will be given to the winners.

NATIONAL SQUASH
Bhola became champion and Shawpan Pervez finished runners-up in the premier division

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Busy 2010 for Tigers



SPORTS REPORTER

The Bangladesh cricket team will have a busy schedule next year as revealed by the home schedules released by the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) on Thursday. The season will start with the tri-nation tournament involving India and Sri Lanka in January.

Sri Lanka will arrive in Dhaka on January 1. India is scheduled to arrive on January 2 to take part in the tri-nation tournament, which will be followed by a two-match Test series against the Tigers.

All the day-night matches of the tri-nation tournament will be held at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium.

After the tournament India and Bangladesh will travel to Chittagong to play the first Test at the Zohur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium starting from January 17 while the second and final Test will be held at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur from January 24 to January 28.

Tigers will then fly for New Zealand to play one Test and three one-day internationals in February and soon after their return they will face England in their next home assignment.

England will arrive in Dhaka on February 17 to play three ODIs and two Tests besides three one-day and one three-day match.

Bangladesh enjoyed a rare success in 2009 a

season they completed with the 4-1 home series victory against Zimbabwe this month. But they await a big challenge in the new year with the top-ranked opponents coming.

In this year Bangladesh played hardly against the top teams rather they took on bottom-ranked Zimbabwe thrice and got a second-ranked West Indies side to achieve a historic Test and one-day series win in the Caribbean.

ITINERARY

(Tri-nation ODI competition & India's tour of Bangladesh)

January 4: Bangladesh v Sri Lanka at Mirpur

January 5: Sri Lanka v India at Mirpur

January 7: Bangladesh v India at Mirpur

January 8: Bangladesh v Sri Lanka at Mirpur

January 10: Sri Lanka v India at Mirpur

January 11: Bangladesh v India at Mirpur

January 13: Final at Mirpur

January 17-21: First Test at Chittagong

January 24-28: Second Test at Mirpur

England's tour of Bangladesh

February 21: One-day Warm-up v BCB XI

February 23: One-day Warm-up v BCB XI

February 25: One-day Warm-up v BCB XI

February 28: First ODI at Mirpur

March 2: Second ODI at Mirpur

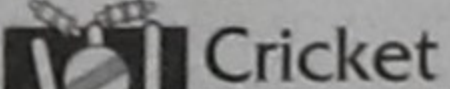
March 5: Third ODI at Chittagong

March 7-9: 3-dayer against Bangladesh A at Chittagong

March 12-16: First Test at Chittagong

March 20-24: Second Test at Mirpur

A tale of two captains



SAKEB TAHSIN SUBHAN

After a successful year the Bangladesh cricket team looks like a settled one. With India and Sri Lanka visiting in January for a tri-series, followed by a Test series against India, the BCB have one crucial question to answer. Who will be captain of the national team, Mashrafe Mortaza or Shakib Al Hasan?

Mashrafe was made captain of the team before the tour of West Indies in June this year. Unfortunately, he was struck down by a knee injury halfway through the first Test and thereafter the reins were passed to the vice-captain Shakib, who has led in Mashrafe's absence ever since.

Having presided over Bangladesh's most successful period (11 wins out of 13 in ODIs, and victories in both the Tests), Shakib has made a strong case for full-time captaincy duties. This claim will have to be tempered by the reminder that all those victories came against weaker opposition. West Indies were in disarray when Bangladesh toured, with all of their first-choice players boycotting the series because of contract disputes with WICB, and Zimbabwe are a team still struggling to find their way back into the Test fold. It may justifiably be argued that the results against these teams would not have been much different had Mashrafe been leading.

Against this argument will have to be pitted Shakib's display as a captain. He has proved to be one of the more proactive captains Bangladesh

has had, not waiting for opponents to make mistakes, but trying to induce them through clever field settings and bowling changes.

Another argument against Shakib is that at 22, and only three years into his career, he is too young and would be better off concentrating on his own performances which have been an asset to the team. Till date, he has shown that the burden of captaincy hasn't weighed him down, but rather has been an incentive to improve. This is borne out in the statistics; his averages are markedly better in both batting and bowling as captain than as just a player.

Even though the statistics favour Shakib, this argument is justified considering that the coming year will pose challenges much stiffer than any he has faced in the matches he has captained. It is realistic to expect that these pressures will be dealt with better by Mashrafe Mortaza, who at 26 is now into his eighth year of international cricket, and much more experienced.

Not that experience is the only quality that is in favour of Mashrafe. Having been appointed captain in the first place, it is only natural that he must have had attributes that the board thought would be suitable for the position. It is unfortunate that he was not able to showcase these because of injury. Regardless, he is a player known for giving a hundred percent every time he is on the field and has become a symbol of fighting spirit, something that has no doubt earned universal respect from the team as well as fans.

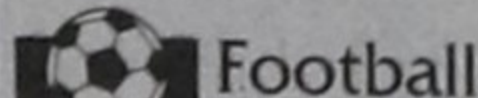
What counts against Mashrafe is not any external factor, but his own body. Notoriously

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(L-R) Germany manager Oliver Bierhoff, head coach Joachim Loew and captain Michael Ballack attend a memorial service for Robert Enke at Marktkirche church in Hanover on Wednesday.

Germans seek answers



INTERNET, Hamburg

German football is likely to examine how it can improve the psychological care of professional footballers following the death of national team goalkeeper Robert Enke. The country's professional footballers' organization VDV and others in the game have called for more help for players suffering from depression or psychological problems.

More than 35,000 people gathered for a procession in Hanover Wednesday evening where a church service was held for Enke who committed suicide on Tuesday evening.

German federation officials, national coach Joachim Loew and captain Michael

Ballack, who had known Enke since a boy, lit candles for the 32-year-old Hanover 96 keeper during the ceremony.

"The Robert Enke tragedy gives us cause to think about certain things which are accepted as usual in this business," Hanover 96 manager Joerg Schmidtke told the Norddeutsche Rundfunk radio station.

"Robert has given us a task that of how to deal with the issue of the care of young players."

Enke, who was hit by a train on a level crossing near his home, had been treated for depression since 2003.

His widow Teresa said Wednesday he had tried to keep his illness from becoming public out of fear of both losing his adoptive daughter Lella and risking his playing career.

The couple had lost their daughter Lara who died in 2006 of a rare heart condition when she was just two.

VDV head Ulf Baranowsky told Deutschlandradio that the Bundesliga needed to think about employing psychologists to help players.

"There are good examples from clubs... who are open for such a subject. It would really be welcome if other measures were to follow in whatever form they take," he said.

Germany called off a friendly international against Chile in Cologne on Saturday but the players will join up again on Sunday following a memorial service for Enke in Hanover to prepare for a friendly next Wednesday against Ivory Coast.

German football federation

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Sweden's Therese Ahlshammar celebrates after winning the women's 50-metre butterfly gold with a new world record at the short-course World Cup swimming competition in Eriksdalshallen on Wednesday.

Another Phelps miss

AFP, Stockholm

US superstar Michael Phelps, shunning the high-tech swimsuit, said he knew landing short-course World Cup titles in Stockholm would likely prove beyond him as a result -- but still came within an ace of pocketing the 200 metres individual medley on Wednesday.

South African Darian Townsend hogged the glory in the end, taking the title in 1:51.79 but Phelps came in second in 1:53.93 to leave Lithuanian Vytautas Janusaitis with bronze in 1:54.34.

Returning to competition for the first time since the world championships in Rome in July, eight-time Olympic champion Phelps is up against it here after choosing to revert to conventional kit in anticipation of the FINA ban on high-tech swimsuits which will take effect at the start of next year.

Most swimmers in Stockholm are still wearing the performance-enhancing

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SL'S TOUR OPENER

No play on Day Two

AFP, Mumbai

Wet ground conditions caused by overnight rain prevented play on the second day of the three-day match between touring Sri Lanka and the Indian board president's XI here on Thursday.

The first day's play was also washed out on Wednesday due to unseasonal rains caused by an approaching cyclone on India's west coast that later drifted away.

Sri Lanka now have just one day to gain match practice ahead of the first Test, which starts at the Motera stadium in Ahmedabad on Monday.

Kumar Sangakkara's men are due to play three Tests, two Twenty20 matches and five one-day internationals over the seven-week tour.

Aussies clear further on top

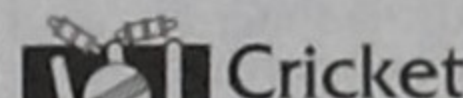
CRICINFO, undated

Australia have widened the gap between themselves and the rest of the teams in the ICC ODI rankings, extending their rating to 130, eight ahead of South Africa and India. Australia were the top-placed team at the start of the ODI series against India, who were No. 2. But following the 4-2 win, Australia have surged further ahead while India have dropped two places.

Australia have had a busy year in ODIs, winning 23 and losing 14 of their 39 games. They began on a disappointing note, with losses to South Africa both home and away, interrupted by a tied series against New Zealand. The recovery began in April with a 3-2 series win over Pakistan in Abu Dhabi, followed by a 6-1

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I lost command: Younus



CRICINFO, undated

Younus Khan has given up the captaincy of Pakistan once again, and taken a temporary break from the game altogether, after failing to overcome a long-running rift with a group of players. Effectively, after Younus informed the Pakistan board chairman Ijaz Butt of his decision, it signalled a victory for player power over an unpopular captain.

"I met the chairman today and told him I needed to rest," Younus told Cricinfo. "I told him I feel as if I have no command over this team. And if a leadership has no command over its players, what is the point of continuing to lead? I also told him that the last 3-4 months have been very trying times for me, not just with the cricket but all that has happened outside it. I need time to get myself together now."

At least eight or nine players in the current squad have been unhappy with Younus as captain for a while and had made their concerns clear to Butt immediately after the Champions Trophy. The loss to New Zealand in the three-match ODI series, in which Younus failed with the bat, cranked up the pressure, with a number of voices in Pakistan calling for his ouster. Today Younus decided that he had lost "command" over the team and carrying on was not an option.

The PCB immediately named Mohammad Yousuf, senior batsman and one-time stand-in captain, as the man to lead the side in a three-Test series in New Zealand beginning later this month. Kamran Akmal, the wicketkeeper, will be his deputy.

The PCB's no-frills press release stated simply that Younus had asked for a rest and Butt is reported to have said that they did not object to the decision. "We did appoint Younus captain until the 2011 World Cup, subject to his performance and fitness, but we have no objection to him asking for a rest, and I don't think it's turmoil in Pakistan cricket," he said.

Younus's tenure, which began earlier this year, has been crippled by a lack of support from his players. Ostensibly his resignation last month, after the Champions Trophy, was over the match-fixing allegations leveled against his side, but as the affair progressed it became increasingly clear that Younus was trying to outmanoeuvre a group of players who were not with him. It worked briefly, as the board made him captain till the 2011 World Cup, with enhanced powers over selection, but the players' support has clearly not been forthcoming.

Younus refused to go into further detail over which players had revolted but it is believed the group is led by Shoaib Malik and includes other seniors such as Shahid Afridi and Kamran Akmal. Sources close to Younus say that he was particularly disappointed in the manner in which some players were dismissed in the last ODI against New Zealand.

Though Pakistan ultimately lost by seven runs, their batting had collapsed to 101 for 9 -- effectively losing those nine wickets for 54 runs -- until a miraculous last-wicket stand took them nearly all the way. But the way established batsmen were dismissed -- in a rash of pull shots -- on a placid pitch has led Younus to conclude that it was done to undermine him.

"He was really unhappy with the shots some

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Federer stunned

Nadal stages spectacular turnaround



AFP, Paris

World number one Roger Federer sank to a surprise 3-6, 7-6 (7/4), 6-4 second-round defeat against unseeded Frenchman Julien Benneteau in the ATP Paris Masters on Wednesday.

The Swiss ace looked on course for the third round after cruising through the first set but came unstuck in the second as uncharacteristic errors began to creep into his game.

Benneteau, the world number 49, was roared on by his home crowd and secured the result of his life with an ace after bringing up match point by rattling a crosscourt backhand past the 15-time Grand Slam-winner.

"He was very strong at the end," said Federer of his 27-year-old opponent, who has never won an ATP title.

"Even in the second set, I don't think I had a break point. I can definitely play better but I can also play much worse. It wasn't a bad performance. Julien went out and got the victory. I had chances and missed them."

Second seed Rafael Nadal, meanwhile, admitted that he was "very lucky" after edging a titanic struggle with Spanish compatriot Nicolas Almagro 3-6, 7-6 (7/2), 7-5 in three hours and 14 minutes.

"I played great tennis in only one moment, but in the rest of the match I didn't play well," said Nadal, who saved five match points after falling 5-6 and 0-40 down in the second set.

"I am very lucky to be in the (next) round. That's the truth. I played bad but I won, which

is the one positive thing."

Nadal will now face another Spaniard in the form of 14th seed Tommy Robredo.

The world's top five players were all in action on Wednesday, with Novak Djokovic, Andy Murray and Juan Martin Del Petro all joining Nadal in the

third round.

British fourth seed Murray saw off America's James Blake 6-3, 6-7 (5/7), 7-6 (7/4) in a match that finished at 0146 local time to set up a match with Czech 13th seed Radek Stepanek.

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Julien Benneteau of France is over the moon after his stunning victory over world number one Swiss Roger Federer in the ATP Paris Indoor Master tournament on Wednesday. Benneteau won 3-6, 7-6, 6-4.

PHOTO: AFP