

Young v'ball

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pabna

The Jesco National Young Volleyball Competition, organized by Pabna District Sports Association in collaboration with Bangladesh Volleyball Federation, got underway today at Pabna Town Hall ground.

On the opening day, Natore defeated hosts Pabna 3-1. Rajshahi Jubo Dal also recorded a 3-1 margin against Naogaon. However, Naogaon Jubo Team handed a 3-0 defeat to Pabna and Rajshahi beat Bogra 3-1.

Brothers

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the 33rd minute when he ran down the right to enter the danger zone before lashing a drive straight to Iran Sheikh in a one-on-one situation on the half-hour mark while Idris fed a nice ball to Mamun, who also drove miles off target despite getting goalkeeper Iran alone.

Rahmatganj brought two chances in their side to step up the attack and they looked more organised after the resumption with Brothers defenders passing a busy time to ease the pressure of the giant-killers.

Rahmatganj came close to opening the account when Idris was presented with a free-header, but the striker headed the chance wide to disappoint Rahmatganj fans in the 67th minute.

Afterwards, Rahmatganj tried hard, but could not open any scoring chance and had to be content with first point in the league.

"We were unlucky not to get full points and the strikers should have cashed in on the chances they got during the match," said Rahmatganj coach Mir Mohammad Faruque.

Brothers coach Wasim Iqbal admitted that Rahmatganj played better than them as they did not have two key players Enok and Steven that made their attacking zone toothless.

V-Day hockey

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In the match, Rubel Hossain put BKSP ahead in the very second minute through a field goal while Abdullah Al Mansur doubled the margin converting a penalty corner. Moinul Islam sealed the match through a field goal five minutes from time.

V-Day tennis

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Pashi as he raced to a 6-0, 6-1 victory. Second seed Ranjan Ram beat another qualifier Selim Hossain 6-0, 6-2. In the women's group, top seed Disha Islam beat Ayesha Sultana 6-1, 6-2 while second seed Sathi Sarker blanked Ranjita 6-0, 6-0.

Sami off

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international cricket. Younus also stepped down as captain, arguing he had "lost command" of the side, and was not considered for the current tour of Australia. Mohammad Yousuf took over as skipper.

Bond's bye

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this decision will prolong his international career," he said. "He remains one of the best fast bowlers in the international game and we're delighted that he's doing all he can to keep playing."

Revamped NCL all set

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the fine tuning of the team and as well made sure a check and balance in the team.

"There was other reasons for reducing number of the matches as this season the National Cricket League T20 competition is included besides one-day competition. If we want to play in the Champions League in future then there is no other choice rather than arrange this kind of T20 competition," said Ashraf.

The BCB had initially pencilled the NCL to start on December 20 but the Jan 1 kick-off represents a 12-day delay.

SQUADS

DHAKA: Javed Omar, Uttam Sarker, Rony Talukdar, Marshal Ayub, Nadif Chowdhury, Shamsur Rahman, Shuvagoto Hom, Nazmul Hossain Milon, Nazimuddin, Anwar Hossain, Mohammed Sharif, Emon Ahmed, Mohammed Azim, Mohammed Rafique, Roqybul Hasan, Arafat Sunny, Mosharrar Hossain, Talha Jubair, Enamul Haque Bijoy, Mominul Hoque, Mehrab Hossain, Nur Hossain, Mahbubul Alam, Shahadat



Action from yesterday's Bangladesh League match between Rahmatganj and Brothers Union at the Birshreshtha Shaheed Mostafa Kamal Stadium in Kamalapur.

Fred on recovery trail

Cricket

AFP, London

Former England test all rounder Andrew Flintoff revealed on his blog that he should be able to return to batting practice in January.

The 32-year-old Lancashire star admitted that he would not be able to bowl after undergoing knee surgery last summer after inspiring England to victory in the Ashes test at Lord's and playing in four of the five Tests as England regained the Ashes.

"It will be good just to start playing some form of cricket again after all this time and it will be great to start hitting balls again," said Flintoff, who suffered a setback in his rehabilitation when he suffered a deep vein thrombosis in September.

"I'm just really looking forward to starting cricket exercises again, which I hope to start early in the new year.

"As long as I don't have any setbacks, I should

be able to start batting against a bowling machine.

"I won't be doing anything daft and I will have to ease into it again. When all you do is go to the gym every day, you can almost forget that you're a cricketer."

However, Flintoff, who is still available for selection for limited overs cricket, conceded that he would have to wait a while to be able to bowl again.

"While it's good to be able to pick up a bat again, I'm still some way away from bowling again just yet," said the charismatic cricketer, who had a disastrous Ashes series in Australia in 2006/07 as captain when they were white-washed 5-0.

"I've been given a programme by the surgeon, Andy Williams, and I will be sticking to that. I can't see me being given the go-ahead to start bowling for a good few weeks yet."

Flintoff -- whose career has been blighted by four ankle operations and two on his knee -- is set to return for a check-up in February when he is hoping to get involved with training sessions at Lancashire.

Schumi Mercedes's

AFP, Berlin



Seven-times world champion Michael Schumacher has signed a one-year deal to return to Formula One racing with Mercedes GP for the 2010 season, online version of German magazine Bild reported on Tuesday evening.

Having retired in 2006, Schumacher, who turns 41 on January 3, will be paid seven million euros (9.9 million US dollars) to be on the grid when the new season starts with the Bahrain Grand Prix on March 14 2010, reported Bild.

It will be 1239 days after his last Formula One race in Sao Paulo at the Brazilian Grand Prix in October 2006 and Schumacher joins Mercedes in an all-German racing team after compatriot Nico Rosberg, 24, signed up last month.

Bild reported Schumacher signed the con-

tract on Tuesday at Mercedes' headquarters in Brackley, England, to return to Formula One having won 91 of his 250 Grand Prix races and started in Pole Position 68 times.

Schumacher had been due to make a remarkable return last season for Ferrari -- for whom he acted as a consultant after retiring -- as a replacement for the injured Felipe Massa but was unable to because of a neck injury.

Schumacher's signature is a major coup for Mercedes, who raced under the Brawn GP banner last season, and a blow to Schumacher's former stable Ferrari.

Ferrari president Luca di Montezemolo admitted last week he is distraught at the prospect of losing Schumacher to a rival team.

Di Montezemolo started working with Schumacher in 1996, when the German joined the Italian constructor from Benetton.

Ricky's run against time

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chamber every day and giving himself every possible chance. He hasn't missed a Test now for what, 60-odd Tests. That pretty much sums up how durable and tough he is."

Ponting has not picked up a bat since his short effort at No. 9 in the second innings in Perth, when he was clearly uncomfortable and unable to fully extend his left arm. Katich said it was not unusual for injured players to sit out of training until the day before a Test, which he was confident would not prove a problem for Ponting.

"With his experience and knowledge of batting, he's the type of guy who can have one hit and then go out and perform," Katich said. "I don't think that will be too big a hindrance for him, it's more just a case of how his elbow

actually feels and whether it's unbearable swinging a bat."

The Australians are so confident of Ponting playing that they have not yet discussed the other possibility, which would involve Michael Clarke stepping in as captain and Hughes finding a place in the batting order. If the specialist opener Hughes was to play, it would create a logjam at the top with Katich and Shane Watson in the in-form opening pair, although both have played much of their career in the middle order.

One option would be to send Hughes in at No. 3 in a direct swap for Ponting, but a more likely scenario involves Hughes and Katich opening and Watson moving down the list. Altering the order so close to a match could unsettle the batsmen but Michael Hussey said the team had shown flexi-

bility in one-day cricket in recent years and most players were adaptable to different positions.

"It would probably be a little bit more challenging in a Test match, where you do like to have your structure and know where you're going to be batting," Hussey said. "But we're becoming more flexible all the time and the game is evolving all the time. I wouldn't see it to be an issue but we're pretty hopeful that he's going to be okay."

The Australians are also keeping an eye on Peter Siddle, who missed the Perth Test due to a hamstring strain but has been included in the 13-man squad for Boxing Day. Siddle was making his comeback in an FR Cup match in Sydney on Wednesday and was expected to be fully fit and available for selection for the Test against Pakistan.

Federer, Serena ITF Champs

Tennis

AFP, Paris

Roger Federer has been named International Tennis Federation (ITF) champion for the fifth time with Serena Williams taking the women's award for the second time.

They will receive their awards at the annual ITF World Champions Dinner on June 1 in Paris, during the French Open.

Federer had an outstanding year regaining the world No.1 ranking from Rafael Nadal after completing a career Grand Slam at Roland Garros with victory over Robin Soderling in the final.

He went on to surpass Pete Sampras by winning his 15th Grand Slam title at

Wimbledon after a memorable final contest against Andy Roddick.

Federer was also runner-up at the Australian Open, where he lost in five sets to Nadal, and the US Open, where he also went down in five sets to Juan Martin del Potro, and helped his country retain its World Group status in Davis Cup.

"It is an honour for me to be named ITF World Champion for a fifth time. It was an incredible year for me both on and off the court," the 28-year-old Swiss star said.

"To win my first Roland Garros title, break the all-time Grand Slam record and regain the No. 1 ranking is amazing. It means a lot to me to finish the year again at the top."

Serena Williams becomes the women's World Champion for the first time since 2002 after producing her best

performances at the biggest events.

The 28-year-old American captured two Grand Slam titles, at the Australian Open and Wimbledon, to improve her collection to 11 majors.

She went on to win the season-ending WTA Championships in Doha, sealing the No.1 ranking in the last event of the year.

Serena also took the doubles year award with sister Venus after taking their career total to ten Grand Slam titles. In so doing she joins Lindsay Davenport and Martina Hingis as the only players to become singles and doubles world champions in the same year.

American twins Bob and Mike Bryan were named as the men's doubles World Champions for the sixth time in seven years.

Flower questions UDRS

Cricket

CRICINFO, undated

England's coach, Andy Flower, finds some aspects of the Umpire Decision Review System (UDRS) "illogical" and isn't a supporter of the ICC initiative that was a focal point of the opening Test against South Africa at Centurion Park.

England did not enjoy much success in their use of the system, with all four of their bowling referrals turned down. That disappointment was compounded, however, when Kevin Pietersen was bowled by Morne Morkel off in the first innings, off what appeared to be a no-ball. With that in mind, Flower argued that if technology was going to be used, it should check the foot position of the bowler every time.

"I'm not a policy-maker and my ideas don't count that much, but I don't really like the questioning of the umpires by the players," he told reporters in Durban. "I think there are also some illogical things about it. We have the technology to review no-balls every ball and we don't use it."

The two most controversial moments came when England asked for a review of a caught-behind appeal against AB de Villiers in the first innings, but technology

couldn't detect what the players had believed to be an audible nick, then when Stuart Broad questioned the length of time South Africa had taken to refer JP Duminy's slow appeal to the third umpire.

Upon being given out, Broad marched over to the on-field umpires, Steve Davis and Aleem Dar, and later went to visit the match referee, Roshan Mahanama, although no charges were brought against him. England have also raised the issue over the time taken between South Africa's appeal and the TV umpire's intervention.

"We spoke to Roshan Mahanama about it and there is no clear indication over how much time it should take," Flower said. "It's not 20 or 30 seconds, but they do just want a brief exchange of views and then a decision made."

"I personally don't like it much to be honest, but it looks as though it's here to stay and certainly is for this series, so there's no point us grumbling about it. We just have to get on with it and make sure we deal with it."

While the review system doesn't have Flower's backing, the under-pressure pair of Alastair Cook and Ian Bell certainly do. He believes both men can bounce back from their twin failures at Centurion Park. Cook made scores of 15 and 12 having spent a lot of time in the latter part of the 2009 season working on his technique,

while Bell managed seven runs in two innings, and was embarrassingly bowled when not offering a shot to Paul Harris.

"Belly got some runs in the pre-tour games and I think he is feeling quite confident about the way he is playing," Flower said. "He had a tough Test, of course. He made a misjudgement in the first innings and got nicked off in the second but he's a high quality player and we are backing him. I think he will be fine."

"Cooky scored runs for the Performance Squad up in Johannesburg then scored some runs in East London," he added. "He's had a tough Test and it was a tough Test for anyone against the new ball. He's remodelled a few things but he is a strong young man, a very fine player and a leader in his own right. I think he is going to do good things for us this series."

Despite the batting problems, including the late collapse of 5 for 13, the series is still all-square and Flower was breathing a sigh of relief after the outcome. "Of course we are relieved that, after losing those wickets against the last new ball, we got out of it," he said.

"We always knew the second new ball was going to be a testing period, although we obviously didn't think we would lose that many wickets. But we did well to fight back and hang on."

Tiger, Elin go separate ways

Golf

AFP, Orlando

Tiger Woods is reportedly yachting to the Bahamas for the holidays to escape the firestorm over his sex scandal while his wife Elin is said to be off back to Sweden for Christmas with her family.

Woods, who turns 34 next week, launched his yacht from Palm Beach for the Bahamas at the weekend, with People magazine quoting an unidentified friend as saying that the golf star faced a deeply unhappy time ahead.

"He's devastated at everything he has lost," the magazine quoted the source as saying. "He will go through some dark times. It's going to be a lonely Christmas for him."

Both People and the Palm Beach Post reported the Bahamas as the supposed destination for the yacht named "Privacy".

Woods has admitted cheating on wife Elin and at least 14 women, one for every major golf crown he has won, have claimed to have had affairs with the world's first billionaire sportsman.

Sponsors have backed away from Woods and come-

dians have made him the punch line for jokes. Woods has put his golf career on hold indefinitely to work on his personal woes.

People also reported that Elin Woods, a Swedish model whom Woods married in 2004, will take the couple's two children with her to Sweden.

Celebrity website TMZ reported Elin would not immediately move to divorce Woods but said she has been especially upset by the sheer number of affairs by her husband and two particularly painful relationships.

She was reportedly most upset about a three-year relationship Woods maintained with one woman and that he was with another woman while she herself was pregnant.

People also reported that Tiger's Thai-born mother, Kultida Woods, was "hurt, angry and disappointed" in her son, according to an unnamed source close to the family.

"She wants to know how he could do this to his family," People reported the source said. "She loves him and will support him through anything but she needs some time to work through this. It was devastating to her."

"She likes Elin, adores her grandchildren. She's worried about them. She doesn't want to see them hurt."

Possible avenues for golf star Woods making a return to the public were reported even as book deals for examinations of Woods's fall from grace were said to be in the works.

MSNBC's Courtney Hazlett said sources close to Woods indicated he might appear on the January 9 edition of Saturday Night Live, which is to be hosted by a friend of Woods, retired basketball star Charles Barkley.

"He's a little incredulous at the way he is being judged," MSNBC quoted the source as saying. "If he went on SNL, it would definitely change the conversation."

The NBC network late-night comedy show spoofed Woods three weeks ago and two weeks ago aimed a parody at US PGA Tour commissioner Tim Finchem, mocking how he might defend events as interest and sponsorship dim without Woods.

Woods is also being sought by Hollywood director Todd Phillips for his sequel to "The Hangover", according to website Hollywood.com. Filming for the new movie is set to begin in about six months for a

2011 release.

"We are going to try and get Tiger Woods for the second one... Yeah, help him regain his image," the site quoted Phillips as saying.

Changes

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average of 14.9 and a five-wicket haul has earned him his maiden call-up in the national squad. Veteran left-arm Mohammad Rafique features in the second spot taking 29 wickets.

Another factor of concern for the cricket fans might be the poor form of Bangladesh's stand-in skipper Shakib Al Hasan. Apart from his poor batting and bowling effort, his captaincy too has come under heavy criticism after the way his side, Abahani lost the final match and with it the title. Chief selector of national side Rafiqul Alam though thinks there is nothing to be concerned about Shakib's poor performance: "Form is temporary, but class is permanent. He is a class player, he proved that too many times. I think he will get over this bad patch and appear in his usual self in international matches." Rafiqul was however satisfied with the performance of most of the other players in the national squad.

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS

- 1 One of the gang
- 4 Practice pugilism
- 8 Frost
- 12 William Tell's home
- 13 Bygone times
- 14 Ceaselessly
- 15 Witness
- 16 Pallet
- 17 "Wozzeck" composer
- 18 Halloween party sites?
- 21 "the ramparts"
- 22 Chow down
- 23 Despondent atmosphere
- 26 Obese
- 27 Calendar pp.
- 30 Fish story
- 31 Peregrinate
- 32 Idiosyncrasy
- 33 Unruly group

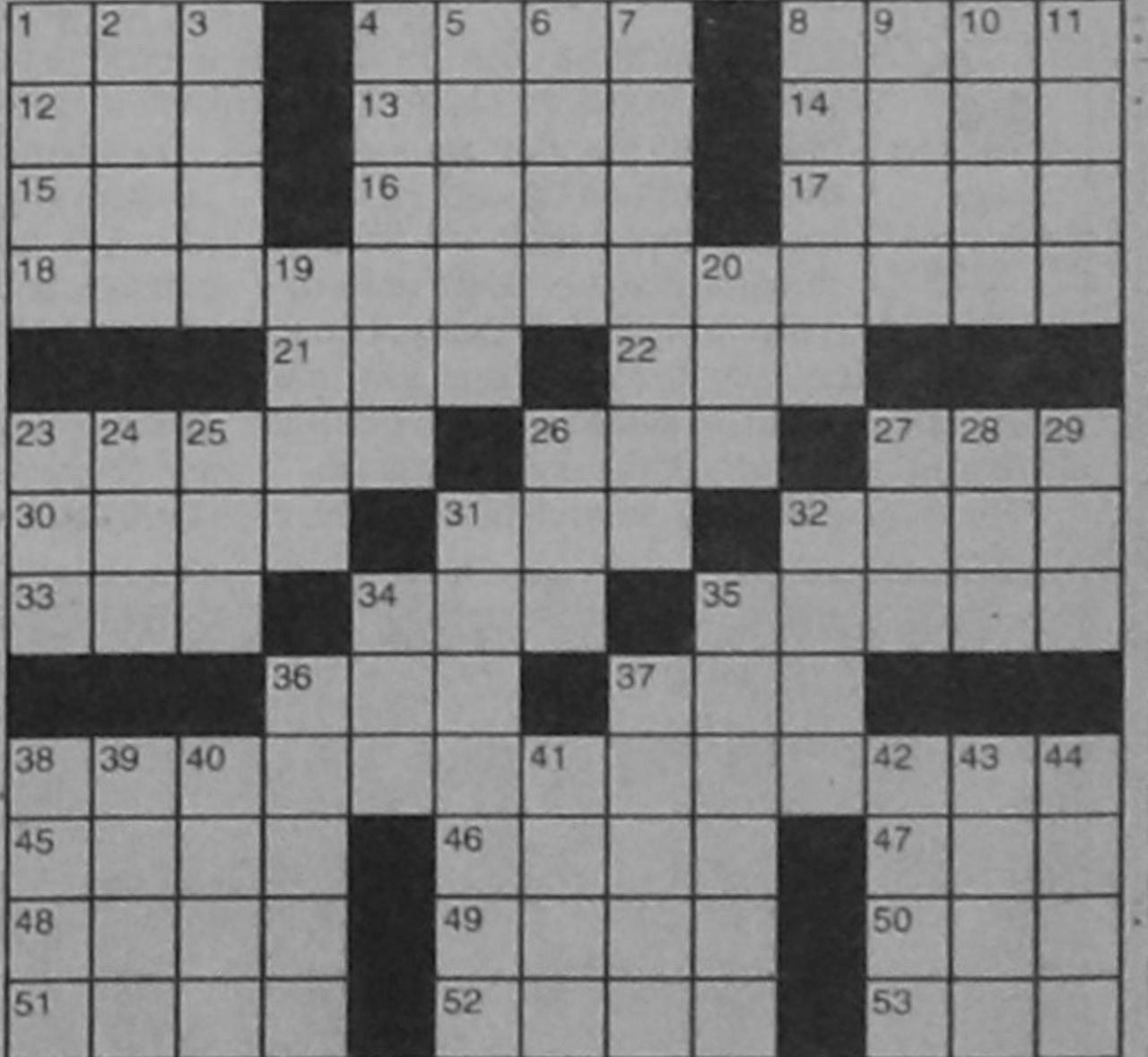
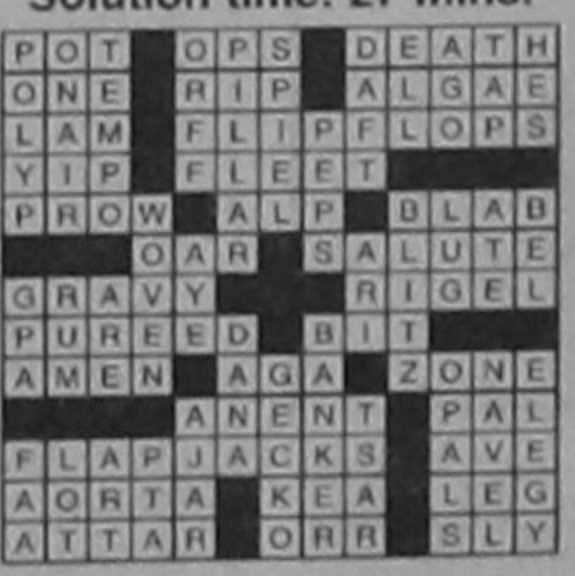
DOWN

- 34 "Are You Smarter Than a 5th Grader?" airt
- 35 Dental filling
- 36 Geologic period
- 37 Inseparable
- 38 Halloween decorations
- 45 Wrinkly citrus
- 46 Hodgepodge
- 47 A billion years
- 48 Compared to
- 49 Night light?
- 50 — generis

19 Midday

- 20 Feudbag tidbit
- 23 Workout venue
- 24 Vientiane native
- 25 Scepter topper
- 26 E-mail alternative
- 27 Thou squared
- 28 — budget
- 29 Firmament
- 31 Agree
- 32 Patella locale
- 34 To and —
- 35 Chant
- 36 — out a living
- 37 Satiric weekly newspaper
- 38 Sticks out
- 39 Turkish official
- 40 Family
- 41 Out of the storm
- 42 Whatever remains
- 43 Subject, usually
- 44 Peevish lit

Solution time: 27 mins.



CRYPTOQUIP

Yesterday's Cryptiquip: WHAT COULD ONE CALL THE PEOPLE WHO RAISED THE WRITER OF "OH! SUSANNA"? FOSTER PARENTS.

Today's Cryptiquip Clue: G equals R