

Saidali starts with a win

SPORTS REPORTER

The Six Seasons Grandmasters chess tournament got underway yesterday at the Tulip Hall of Uttara Club with ten players including three Grandmasters taking part.

GM Niaz Murshed, FM Abu Sufian Shakil, FM Minhazuddin Ahmed Sagar and FM Aminul Islam drew their first game on the opening day while Uzbek GM Ildachev Saidali won his board against FM Syed Mahfuzur Rahman.

Shakil with white pieces and French Defense drew with Indian GM Dibyendu Barua, Minhazuddin drew with Indian IM Sahaj Grover, Niaz drew with Aminul, Indian IM Saptarshi Roy Chowdhury drew with compatriot Khurruddin Kumar.

It was the second tournament, organised by Six Seasons Chess and headed by subcontinent's first Grand Master Niaz Murshed, after the Parachute Advanced International Chess Tournament that concluded on Monday in Cox's Bazar where Bangladesh Shamima Akhter Liza earned her first International Master norm.

The tournament will be held in round-robin league and a player needs seven points out of nine games to earn a GM norm while to achieve a IM norm, a player needs 5.5 points from the tournament.

Rana's death anniversary observed

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

The third death anniversary of national cricketers Manjarul Islam Rana and first-class cricketer Sajjadul Hasan Setu was observed with due solemnity in Khulna yesterday.

As part of the day's programmes, Khulna District Sports Association, Bangladesh Sports Writers Association and family members separately placed floral wreaths at graves of the two cricketers in the morning.

Special prayers at mosques and milad mahfil at their residences and BSWA were also held.

Rana was only 22 when he died in a road accident along with 26-year-old Setu in Khulna on way to Chuknagar after posting win in the BCB Challenge Cup tournament against Young Pigeon Club on March 16 in 2007.

All-rounder Rana played 26 Tests and 25 one-day internationals for Bangladesh.

High praise

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"Of course I am happy with the hundred but the most important things to me was that I played so many balls in my innings. I am working hard and now my main focus is how to spend more time in the middle," he added.

Compliments also came from Swann about Junaed batting as he said: "He batted phenomenally. It's testament to him that he got everyone so frustrated. We think we're a decent attack and he proved a thorn in our side. So the swearing was just emotion, which Cook told us not to do, so I'm in his bad books. I told the batsman he batted very well. It wasn't meant as a personal slight, it was just a release of pent of frustration. He got a superb hundred."

He also apologized for swearing at Junaed whose dismissal paved the way for England to finish the game before the tea break.

Cook pleased

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bowled well. Of course, when a partnership is going your mind does wander, but it was the right decision because we won the game," he defended.

Cook also defended his decision not to enforce follow-on despite having a 303-run first-innings lead.

"Those conditions on day three, hot and humid and we bowled 90 overs, so our lads needed a rest. It's amazing what two session off does for a bowler. Even if we hadn't won the game I'd have still backed my decision."



Indian International Master Sahaj Grover (L) and FM Minhazuddin Ahmed Sagar of Bangladesh during their Six Seasons Grandmasters chess tournament engagement at the Tulip Hall in Uttara Club yesterday.

Clarke saga must end

Cricket

CRICINFO, undated

The Clarke Distraction. It sounds like the title of a Robert Ludlum thriller, but the Australians want the abridged version. They are keen to skip forward to the final chapter and put behind them the drama and plot twists surrounding their vice-captain's very public break-up with his fiancée Lara Bingle.

They have three days to prepare for the first Test against New Zealand and on Tuesday trained for the first time since Michael Clarke rejoined the squad. The coach Tim Nielsen said the players would sit down during the day to discuss the best way to overcome the disruption to their preparation that the Clarke-Bingle media buzz has created.

"We'll have a chat about it all," Nielsen said. "There's no real effect. They're professional sportsmen. He's a player going through a personal issue like players tend to any day of the week. It's just that we happen to do it in a public forum, pretty much. We're all supporting him and he's comfortable where he's at. We're looking forward to getting into the cricket and getting back to what we do best."

"It's just one of the things we deal with every day. It's the hard part about living on the road. It's the hard part about living a life that's quite public. But we take that, we understand what we're doing. Our challenge today is to make sure we're all on the same page with the cricket starting on Friday and we prepare as well as we can for that game. We'll deal with the distractions and move forward."

Such has been the media frenzy surrounding the break-up in Australia that one TV network sent a reporter and cameraman on Clarke's flight from Sydney to Wellington in an attempt to get an exclusive interview. The Australian media contingent following the team has swelled significantly over the past few days and almost every question asked of players and coaches relates to Clarke.

The Australian team will be looking forward to Friday, when the focus returns to the action

on the field. The New Zealand fans are certain to give Clarke a verbal barrage when he jogs on to the Basin Reserve but the fast bowler Chris Martin hopes the sledging doesn't come from any of the New Zealand players.

"He treats people he plays against with respect and that should be the way he gets treated as well," Martin said of Clarke. "That's pretty much how it works. The fans will probably have a ball but that's nothing to do with us. I know that I've stood on a few boundaries in Australia and been ripped to shreds so it's nothing new on either side of the Tasman and it's actually something that's quite humorous."

"It's very tabloid. I suppose cricket maybe in the '80s when Botham and Richards and those guys were floating around, it may have been a bit more tabloidy, but I haven't seen it since then. I think the tabloids may have even had a separate crew for Botham that followed him around, so I hope Michael doesn't have to deal with that."

Perhaps Martin forgot about a certain blond legspinner who often made headlines. Shane Warne was the classic example of a player who was able to compartmentalise his life; no matter what personal issues he had going on and regardless of how much negative press he received, Warne was always able to set those problems aside and perform on the field.

That is the challenge for Clarke over the next couple of weeks. If he steps out on Friday and bats with the class and poise that brought him 959 runs at 56.41 over the past year, some of the scrutiny will blow over with the Wellington breeze. Nielsen is confident that with the support of his teammates, Clarke can do that.

"The players who do it the longest and are the most successful, they do it the best," Nielsen said. "That's the nature of the beast. That's why Michael has played 60 Test matches and performed so well. You've got the likes of Ponting and Katich and Hussey who have played a huge amount of Test match cricket and I'm sure they will be a huge support for him. The rest of the group will help him out as well."

But for now, there could be a few chapters of the Clarke saga yet to be written.

Kallis gets

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swing their arms. The fuller lengths didn't work and that was illustrated by one particular over from Sreesanth, which went for 25. The only way to restrict them was to either bowl yorkers or hurry them up with pace and bounce but Punjab didn't possess the bowlers to do either.

SCORES IN BRIEF
KINGS XI PUNJAB: 203 for 3 (Bopara 77, Bisla 73, Jayawardene 26)
BANGALORE ROYAL CHALLENGERS: 204 for 2 (Pandey 38, Kallis 89 not out, Uthappa 51)
Result: Bangalore Royal Challengers won by eight wickets.
Man-of-the-match: Jaques Kallis.

BFF to shift

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leave the venue for the Independence Day preparations as the Prime Minister is supposed to attend the programme on March 26.

It's learned that the BFF is ready to hold three matches -- Brothers Union vs Feni Soccer on March 21, Arambagh KS vs Farashganj SC on March 22 and Muktiyoddha Sangsad vs Beanibazar SC on March 23 -- at Kamalapur.

The BFF also considers starting the second-leg of the professional football league two or three days later from their schedule of March 28.

Muktis sixth

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points though Arambagh played a match less than Farashganj and Mukti joddha's 11 outings.

It was the second successive victory for the All Reds, who had defeated Chittagong Mohammedan 2-1 in their previous match and Rony, who was one of scorers, this time rescued Muktiyoddha in the 23rd minute.

Jelena rolls, Kim falls

Tennis

AFP, Indian Wells

It wasn't pretty, but it was a win, and for eighth-seeded Jelena Jankovic that was enough Monday, and more than US Open champ Kim Clijsters could manage at the BNP Paribas Open.

Jankovic, a former world number one now ranked ninth in the world, has struggled to get her 2010 season rolling but survived a roller-coaster third-round battle with Italian Sara Errani 2-6, 7-6, 6-4.

Clijsters, who won the title in 2003 and 2005, fell 6-4, 1-6, 7-6 to 27th-ranked Russian Alisa Kleybanova, who won her first WTA title at Kuala Lumpur last month.

After storming back to take the second set, Clijsters appeared to be on her way against 20-year-old Kleybanova when she won the first three games of the third.

But Kleybanova responded to level the set at 3-3 and it went with serve until the tiebreaker. Once again Clijsters raced ahead, taking a 4-0 lead, but Kleybanova won the last seven points to seize the victory over the former world number one.

"I definitely think I let it slip away a little bit," Clijsters said. "What got me to be ahead was I was playing aggressive tennis and being dominant. I think she, by putting me under pressure during those long rallies, I think that, I kind of just backed off a little bit..."

"This is a match where I just have to have that little bit of killer instinct back and try to just finish it off when I have my chances," added Clijsters, who won the US Open last September in just her third tournament since coming out of retirement.

She won again in Brisbane to launch her 2010 season, but slumped to a 6-0, 6-1 loss to Nadia Petrova in the third round of the Australian Open.

Clijsters said she didn't believe her lighter schedule -- as she balances motherhood with a tennis career -- was a factor in the defeat.

"I feel really happy with the way that I've been improving since the Australian Open. I lost. It was a good match, it was close."

Third-seeded Victoria Azarenka of Belarus was another third-round casualty, falling 7-6, 6-2 to Spain's Maria Jose Martinez Sanchez.

Jankovic managed to avoid the upset bug but it was close.

"I never thought I would lose the match, said Jankovic -- even though she was cutting it close when she was one point away from going 5-2 down in the third set against Errani, the world number 49 who was seeking her first win against a top-10 player.

"I knew I could still win it, I was still there, and I just fought very well. That's what got me through the match."

But Jankovic said it was exhausting, especially since she was frustrated by her own inconsistency.

"I would play a couple of points well but then would give away a lot of points, too," said Jankovic. "When I was down 4-2 in the third, and 0-40 to go down 5-2, it was really a battle out there," she said.

Jankovic set up a fourth-round meeting with Israel's Shahar Peer, a 6-4, 6-7, 6-1 winner over ninth-seeded Italian Flavia Pennetta.

Those making it safely through included eighth-seeded Australian Samantha Stosur, whose 6-3, 6-0 win over Anastasia Pavlyuchenkova set up a clash with defending champion Vera Zvonareva, a 6-2, 6-3 winner over Anastasiya Sevastova of Latvia.

Massa's move cost me dear, says Hamilton

INTERNET, undated



Former world champion Lewis Hamilton has blamed an 'aggressive' move from Ferrari rival Felipe Massa at the start of Sunday's F1 2010 curtain-raising Bahrain Grand Prix for costing him the chance to battle the Brazilian's teammate Fernando Alonso for victory in Sakhir.

Massa and Hamilton began the race in the desert kingdom from second and fourth spots on the grid respectively, but the McLaren-Mercedes ace claims that he was 'squeezed' when the lights went out causing him to cede track position to the Mercedes Grand Prix of Nico Rosberg as he found himself forced offline and consequently lost momentum.

Despite his best efforts on a heavy fuel load, the British star would not succeed in clearing the young German until the pair made their sole pit-stops of the race on laps 15 (Hamilton) and 16 (Rosberg). Although he subsequently went on to put on a charge that took him to barely seven seconds adrift of his earlier duellist Massa at the chequered flag, the 25-year-old contends that had things worked out differently at the start, he could perhaps have been challenging Alonso for the top step of the podium rather than occupying the bottom one.

"I didn't even know who it was," Hamilton told the BBC after watching a re-run of the first few seconds of the grand prix, making it clear that in his

opinion Massa had overstepped the mark. "He was squeezing, he looked in the mirror...it was pretty aggressive. I didn't realise how far I was ahead. I probably wouldn't have risked banging wheels at that speed."

"If I had pulled that move off on the outside, I would have been able to keep up with Fernando. I honestly feel that I would have been able to keep up, but it's all about if and when."

That said, the eleven-time grand prix-winner did concede that the Ferrari is 'definitely the car to beat' at the moment -- but equally he knows where McLaren needs to improve if it is to consistently take the fight to the Scuderia in the races to come.

"In clear air, on new tyres, the car felt great," Hamilton mused of the MP4-25's performance, "(but) we have to make a big step, because in the middle sector (of the lap) we are really lacking. Since I have been here at McLaren we have never really had an amazing rear end. The car is great in the high-speed but not so good in the low and medium-speed corners at the rear, so we really need to pick up some downforce there."

Dilshan writes

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to be a Sri Lankan film, Dilshan plans to market the movie in India as well. The title and cast is yet to be decided, but don't be surprised if the cast has an Indian connection. "I am thinking about the cast, though I want to have someone like Hrithik Roshan in it," said Dilshan.

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS 39 Summer footwear 1 Sheepish remark 4 Spring-time mo. 7 Reed instrument 11 Lisa, ex of "The View" 13 H1N1, for example 14 Tarzan's transport 15 Smell the purpose 16 Spinning toy 17 Paradise 18 Hiawatha's craft 20 Have on 22 Actress Merkel 24 Poor substitute 28 Baby sitter, often 32 Actress Sevigny 33 Fat 34 Sort 36 Competent 37 Pruritic 39 Summer footwear 41 Advantage 43 As well 44 Sea bird 46 Spin 50 Start a garden 53 Melody 55 Reverberate 56 Entreaty 57 Possibly will 58 Serves the purpose 59 Partner in crime 60 Before 61 Singer "King" Cole 19 Conclusion 21 Joan of — 23 Parisian pal 25 Actress Jessica 26 Highway payment 27 Zorro's marks 28 Smooth-talking 29 Assess 30 Assess — enemy 31 Capp and Capone 35 "Krazy —" 38 Thee 40 "... or — to be" 42 Lighter output 45 Story-teller 47 PC picture 48 Comedian Caroline 49 Missing 50 Hot tub 51 Right angle 52 Slithery fish 54 "Catcher in the —"

Grid for the crossword puzzle with numbers 1-61 indicating starting positions for the clues.

CRYPTOQUIP

J T W N H O C W M T N N S M G S
J O O M Q O I Q M F Q N K H O I K W
T M G O M Q O J V , W N H V N H K S V M K K
J O M G J G V C I S J F K I I S J F K I .

Saturday's Cryptoquip: A COUPLE OF SEA LIONS USED TO BE FRIENDS ONLY, BUT OVER TIME THEY HAVE BECOME SEAL-MATES. Today's Cryptoquip Clue: T equals F

A little part of England

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much comfortable and familiar here in Bangladesh where the stadium, fans and conditions are very nice to enjoy the cricket," he added.

Terming the last day of the Test as an interesting one he said, "Bangladesh have improved much in one-dayers over the last seven years since 2003, when I had seen them at the MA Aziz Stadium. But they are yet to improve in Tests and it will take time."

Sara Dumbleton who came here with her husband Dean Dumbleton said it is the seventh country they visited with the English team after Australia, New Zealand, Sri Lanka, India, South Africa and

West Indies.

"We feel no problem here in Chittagong and we are enjoying the nice breeze from the galleries while the local fans are very friendly when compared to the other countries we have visited," said Sara who works at her family restaurant in London.

"The stadium is situated at a distant place from the city centre and if there can be arranged a giant screen for watching replays, it would have been nicer," they observed.

The founder member of Barmy Army and in-charge of the visiting Barmy Army team - Gilo Wellington informed that around 200 supporters of

their group arrived in Chittagong and the number may go to five hundred in the next and last Test match in Dhaka.

The sobriquet of Barmy Army was gained in Australia back in 1994 when the media Down Under were regaled with the group of singing, cheering English supporters who had traveled all the way to encourage their team.

Since then, the Barmy Army has grown considerably and their members travel all over the world at their own cost, while at the same time organizing several charity activities to popularize cricket.

Tigers show their grit

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"We are hardly bothered with the result rather we are looking to the bright sights. We had a decent batting in both innings and our pacers also bowled well and you see, previously hardly one batsman showed something but now two or three batsmen performed simultaneously in a match," said a confident Shakib.

The Bangladesh captain was also not ready to regret his decision to put their opponents in on a batting paradise.

"I'm not frustrated with the decision after the behavior of the pitch in the fifth day because still it was a good track for batting," defended Shakib. Bangladesh definitely can take something from the match when they play the second Test at the Sher-e-Bangla

National Stadium in Mirpur but Shakib said that after a grueling five days play his boys were looking for some rest.

SCOREBOARD
Final scoreboard on the fifth and final day of the first Test between Bangladesh and England at the Zahur Ahmed Stadium in Chittagong on Tuesday:
ENGLAND: First innings 599-6 decl (Cook 173, Collingwood 145)
BANGLADESH: First innings 296 (Tamim 86, Mushfiqur 79; Swann 5-90)
ENGLAND: Second innings 209-7 decl (Bell 39 not out; Shakib 4-62)
BANGLADESH: Second innings (191-5 overnight)
Tamim b Swann 14
Imrul c Prior b Finn 23
Junaed c Collingwood b Swann 106

Aftab c Prior b Bresnan 26
Mahmudullah b Bresnan 5
Shakib lbw b Swann 4
Mushfiqur b Swann 95
Nayeem c Carberry b Swann 36
Razzak lbw b Broad 1
Shahadat c Prior b Bresnan 12
Rubel not out 0
Extras: (b-2, lb-7) 9
Total: (All out in 124 overs) 331
Fall of wickets: 1-33, 2-45, 3-99, 4-105, 5-110, 6-277, 7-294, 8-301, 9-327, 10-331.
Bowler O M R W
Broad 24 7 65 1
Bresnan 24 7 63 3
Finn 18 7 47 1
Swann 49 11 127 5
Pietersen 7 1 15 0
Trott 2 0 5 0
Result: England won by 181 runs.
Man-of-the-match: Graeme Swann.
Second Test: Dhaka (March 20-24)