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**19**  
**DAYS**  
**TO GO**

**SOUTH AFRICA 2010**  
**FIFA**  
**WORLD CUP**

## Dawn of a new era

For the first time in 16 years, the tournament returned to South America, and not without a little controversy. Argentina was governed by a military junta that had come to power in bloody fashion and was known to deal with its critics through torture and imprisonment. This political situation had led many countries to consider boycotting Argentina for its human rights abuses but diplomacy on the part of the junta meant that, eventually, every qualifier lined up.

Netherlands had led the calls for a boycott but they would still have to do without Johan Cruyff, who had promised wife Danny that he wouldn't travel to South America after a supposed kidnapping attempt. West Germany, meanwhile, were without Franz Beckenbauer and were a shadow of the side that had won in 1974.

The hosts were favourites. Their star was Mario Kempes, a veteran of 1974 who had developed into the complete striker. Chain-smoking, hippified coach Cesar Luis Menotti could also count on the talents of skipper and sweeper Daniel Passarella, midfield playmaker Osvaldo Ardiles, Kempes's strike partner Leopoldo Luque and keeper Ubaldo Fillol. He even had the luxury of leaving 17-year-old wunderkind Diego Maradona out of his final 22-man squad.

But the Argentines had a difficult time in the first round, where they faced a French team featuring a young Michel Platini. After an extremely narrow 2-1 victory, Argentina needed a win against the Italians to remain in their preferred base of Buenos Aires. They failed, with Roberto Betegga scoring the only goal for the Italians.

Netherlands, meanwhile, were struggling without Cruyff and narrowly squeezed through in a group that Peru won, with Teofilo Cubillas making a welcome return to the finals. Between the Dutch and the second group stage lay the Scots, who, despite coach Ally MacLeod's prediction that they could win the entire tournament, had been crushed by Peru and, more embarrassingly, played out an X-rated draw with Iran that goes down in history as one of the worst games in the World Cup of all-time.

Scotland needed to beat the Dutch by two clear goals and, after Archie Gemmill scored a legendary goal to put them 3-1 up, they were in dreamland. Not for long, as Johnny Rep scored the goal that took the Dutch through just four minutes later.

TO BE CONTINUED

## Fingers crossed for Shakib

Cricket

AFP, Derby

Bangladesh were desperately hoping captain Shakib Al Hasan makes a speedy recovery from chickenpox after his side lost by seven wickets to England Lions on Friday.

Only Jahurul Islam showed the necessary application required on a Derby pitch that helped the seamers to score an unbeaten 58 off 153 balls and was the only Bangladeshi batsman to pass 50 in the game.

Bangladesh face England at Lord's in the first Test starting on Thursday, but this match was really decided on Thursday afternoon when the tourists lost wickets to a rash of ill-judged shots to collapse to 139 for nine, a lead of just 63.

Rubel Hossain dug in to see him to his half-century and made the Lions bowlers work for the last wicket on a hot, humid morning on Friday.

Jahurul and Rubel continued the stand which had rescued their side from a two-day defeat and batted for another 11 overs before Ravi Bopara, pushing for an England Test recall, struck.

Bopara finished with four for 14 in the innings and seven for 23 in the match.

Lions skipper and England opener Alastair Cook then made an unbeaten 42 from 55 balls as his team easily chased down a target of 86.

Bangladesh's Australian coach Jamie Siddons said he was hopeful that Shakib would be fit for Lord's.

"He's much better. He bowled and batted today [Saturday] and walked some laps. I'm pretty confident he's pacing himself well and will definitely be putting his hand up to play," said Siddons.

"That's good news for us because he's an integral part of our line-up and balances our team out nicely."

On the Lord's Test, Siddons added: "We are hoping for a really good performance."

"We've played good Test cricket over the last six months and pushed England in Bangladesh and hopefully, all things being even, we will play really well at Lord's."



**TOUR DE AFRICA:** Members of the French football team paddle their way to a training session at a lake in Tignes of the French Alps on Saturday. The losing finalists of 2006 World Cup are preparing for the coming showpiece event to be held in South Africa from June 11 to July 11. France will play Uruguay in a Group A match on the opening day at Cape Town.

PHOTO: AFP

## BANGLADESH LEAGUE Brothers draw with Shuktara

SPORTS REPORTER

Brothers Union shared the spoils in a 0-0 with Shuktara Juba Sangsad in their clash of the Bangladesh League at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

The Orange remain in the eighth position with 23 points while Shuktara are in 12th slot of the 13-team league with 17 points, both having played 23 matches.

In the other match of the day, Chittagong Mohammedan SC upset Muktiyoddha Sangsad 1-0 at the MA Aziz Stadium in Chittagong.

An injury time goal in the first-half from Guinean recruit Mohammed Lamine Soumah made the difference between the two teams.

Chittagong Mohammedan have 27 points for the fifth place while Muktiyoddha remain one place below with 24 points, both having played 23 games.

Arambagh and Rahmatganj will meet today at 4pm at the Bangabandhu National Stadium while bottom-of-the-table Beanibazar of Sylhet will take on lowly Chittagong Abahani at the Sylhet Stadium at 3:30pm.

## Controversy keeps coming

AFP, Paris



PHOTO: AFP

Rarely can a team have arrived at a World Cup with more baggage than France, whose qualification for the showpiece tournament was overshadowed by an outrageous handball at the expense of Ireland.

The flick of a hand in a play-off last November by none other than widely-admired France captain Thierry Henry led to the goal that broke Irish hearts and sent the French to South Africa for the June 11-July 11 finals.

Henry was forced to make a public apology, FIFA president Sepp Blatter apologised, and there was even talk at one stage of the match being replayed. It wasn't, to the dismay of Ireland.

If that wasn't enough, the French team was then rocked by a sex scandal linking members of the team, including star player Franck Ribery, to an under-age call-girl.

Ribery and an entire nation of football fans now face an anxious wait to find out whether the judge leading the inquiry will bring charges against arguably the most gifted player in coach Raymond Domenech's squad.

If charged and found guilty Ribery, who is married and has two daughters, could face a maximum sentence of three years in prison and a 45,000-euro fine.

Added to that is the standing of

Domenech, appointed in 2004 but widely disliked in France and who will be replaced by former skipper Laurent Blanc after the World Cup is over.

He only held on to his job by the skin of his teeth after France's disappointing Euro 2008 campaign and was not a popular figure as his team struggled through qualification for what will be their 13th World Cup.

But despite the damaging headlines, France will nonetheless arrive in South Africa among the traditional favourites to be crowned world champions after their exploits in winning the 1998 World Cup on home soil and then making the final in Germany in 2006. The 2000 European champions also managed third-place finishes in 1958 and 1986, as well as fourth spot in 1982 to confirm their ability to produce the goods on the big stage.

France have been drawn in Group A alongside hosts South Africa, Mexico and Uruguay.

They open their campaign against Uruguay in Cape Town on June 11, before playing Mexico six days later in Polokwane and wrapping up their pool matches against South Africa in Bloemfontein on June 22.

"The first thing that's clear when you look at the make-up of the eight groups - and ours in particular - is that it's not going to be easy for anyone," said Domenech.

"We are truly delighted and honoured to be playing against an African team at the first World Cup to be held in the conti-

nent, but even more so against the host nation."

Domenech will have to do without Zinedine Zidane, Fabien Barthez, Claude Makelele and Lilian Thuram, who all called time on their international careers in 2006.

With Patrick Vieira having failed to make the provisional 30-man squad, sole France 1998 survivor Henry has taken the captain's armband, with William Gallas the leader at the back and Jeremy Toulalan and Lassana Diarra shoring up midfield.

The emergence of Yoann Gourcuff, the talent of Ribery and the rejuvenation of Nicolas Anelka have given the coach a variety of options in attack, where Andre-Pierre Gignac and Florent Malouda will also be hoping to feature.

Striker Djibril Cisse received his first call-up since being cut from France's squad prior to the 2008 European Championship, after netting 29 goals this season for Greek champions Panathinaikos.

There were also first call-ups for 25-year-old Marseille winger Mathieu Valbuena and 28-year-old Bordeaux centre-back Marc Planus.

"There is a team and there are those who will come alongside," said Domenech. "They have to bring something: a bit of freshness, a bit of calmness, a bit of aggressiveness. Each in their own way can bring a little extra."

"It is a sign for them that they are on the right path."

## Second four-dayer from today

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh A team will get their last chance to impress when they meet visiting West Indies A in the second and final four-dayer at BKSP in Savar from today.

Smarting from a massive 114-run defeat in the first four-dayer at Mirpur, the second string Bangladesh side's main focus would be to improve their batting as they have shown poor form in the last month or so.

In the recent home series, Bangladesh A badly lost two four-day games against South Africa A at home and then failed to win single match in the tri-nation one-day series involving South Africa A and West Indies A.

## Senior Div football

SPORTS REPORTER

Sunrise Sporting Club drew 1-1 with Wari Club in their Metropolis Senior Division Football League at Birshreshtha Mostafa Kamal Stadium in Kamalapur yesterday.

Wari took the lead in the 7th minute through Shahin, only to see Atikul equalise for Sunrise in the 66th minute.

The other match between Fakirerpool SC and Uttar Baridhara ended goalless at the same venue.



**STAR Sports**  
French Open  
First Round  
Live from 3:00pm  
**STAR Cricket**  
New Zealand v Sri Lanka  
Second T20 International  
Live from 10:00pm



**Day's Event**  
Bangladesh League  
Beanibazar v Ctg Abahani  
Time: 3:30pm  
Venue: Sylhet Stadium  
Rahmatganj v Arambagh  
Time: 4:00pm  
Venue: Bangabandhu National Stadium, Dhaka

## FRENCH OPEN GETS UNDERWAY TODAY Organisers ponder site switch

AFP, Paris



Organisers of French Open, season's second Grand Slam event that starts here today, revealed on Saturday they are considering two options to increase the tournament's capacity: expanding Roland Garros or moving to one of three potential new sites.

"We don't know if the best future lies with keeping this strong urban location with its huge assets and its limits or if the vision should involve reconstruction, starting with a blank page where we would have space," said French Tennis Federation (FFT) chief executive and tournament director Gilbert Ysern at a press conference at Roland Garros.

Of the four Grand Slam tournaments, Roland Garros is the smallest at 8.5 hectares. The venue for the US Open is 14 hectares and both Wimbledon and the Australian Open take place on 20 hectare sites.

"Whatever improvements we make, we have to push the walls. We have to find additional space outside," added Ysern.

Earlier this week, the Paris town council unveiled an extension project for the current site that would involve installing a retractable roof on Centre Court and the use of a

hectare of the Boulogne forest to the west of Paris.

"It's definitely a very attractive project," said Ysern.

"It's a project that would

not necessarily give us the equivalent in terms of hectares of the three other Grand Slam tournaments. But it would allow us to stay at this

magnificent site at Porte d'Auteuil."

Ysern however underlined that "we're sticking with an urban tournament so the rights of way are limited. Therefore looking at relocation still makes sense as well."

Three sites on the outskirts of Paris, at Marne-la-Vallee, Versailles and Gonesse, are being assessed as possible venues for relocation.

If the French Open stays in Paris, the cost of extending the site is estimated to be 200 million euros, while relocation would cost 600 million euros, according to Ysern, who confirmed that a final decision would be made in February 2011.

Four-time champion Justine Henin, who will return to Roland Garros next week after a three-year absence, said she would support the FFT's decision but admitted her preference was for the tournament to stay put.

"It's difficult to imagine that Roland Garros will be elsewhere," she said at a press conference on Friday.

"I hope they will find solutions to keep the tournament here, because the history is behind this place."

"But sometimes, some decisions are necessary and logical. So let's stay down to earth about this and let's take the best decision."



PHOTO: AFP

Defending French Open women's singles champion Svetlana Kuznetsova of Russia trains at the Roland Garros in Paris yesterday. The French Open, season's second Grand Slam after the Australian Open, begins today.

## RCCI, BL College regional champs

SPORTS REPORTER

BL College became Khulna divisional champions when they defeated Doulatpur Day Night College in tie-breaker in the inter-college Clear Men Confidence Cup football tournament yesterday.

After the match was locked at 1-1 in regulation time and extra time, the match was down to the dreaded penalty shoot-out in which BL College prevailed, winning by a 4-2 margin.

Away in Rangpur, RCCI Public School & College made light work of Lions College with a 5-0 victory.

BL College and RCCI Public School & College were rewarded with Tk 25,000 as prize money and have qualified for the quarterfinals of the competition that begins in Dhaka on June 3.

## LOCAL SNIPPETS

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh Edible Oil Ltd (BEOL) came forward to assist Bangladesh Kabaddi Federation (BKF) for improvement of the country's national game.

A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the two parties was signed yesterday at the Pan Pacific Sonargaon Hotel. Mizan Super Refined Palm Olein, a popular brand of BEOL, will provide Tk 1.20 crore for a two-year period. They will take different initiatives including sponsoring national kabaddi competitions, national women's kabaddi, premier league, school and youth kabaddi in a bid to popularise the traditional game.

"After this agreement now it will be possible for the Kabaddi federation to smoothly hold the different national and international events till 2012. As per the agreement they (BEOL) will be with the federation till December 2012. Our main target is to secure a gold medal in the international competitions by 2018," said Munir Hossain, BKF general secretary.

"Kabaddi is our national sport but unfortunately this game had hardly had any assistance. BKF set a target to earn gold medal in the 2018 Asian Games Kabaddi and we want to be a part of this brave adventure," Shoaib Mohammad Asaduzzaman, BEOL head of sales and marketing.

**KHO KHO COMMITTEE**  
National Sports Council (NSC) re-instituted the Bangladesh Kho Kho Federation. A 27-member committee was formed where Shafiq Alam Mehedi, secretary of civil aviation and tourism, has been named president and Fazlur Rahman Babul appointed general secretary.

The other office bearers are ABM Riazul Kabir Kaiser, Mustafa Azad Chowdhury, Abdul Rakib Kajmi, SM Habibur Rahman (vice-president), Faruque Dhalil and Abdul Hakim Mia (joint-secretary), Hafizuddin Sheikh (treasurer), Kazi ABM Imran, Mohiuddin Ahmed Bahar, AM Fazlur Rahman, Asaduzzaman Badsha, Abdul Munaf Sarker, Alamgir Kabir, Subimal Chandra as, Debabrota Dey Debu, Salah Uddin Ahmed, Al Mamun, Murel Gomez, Ainal Haque Shawpan, Zihad Khan, Asgrafunesa Diana, Shraboni Poddar, Zahidul Islam Tipu, Nurunabi Bhuiyan Raju and Mazharul Islam Tuhiin.

**UNDER-16 CRICKET**  
Liton Kumar Das hit an unbeaten 108 as BKSP scored 265 for five against Rajshahi Division North on the first day of the two-day first semifinal of the Standard Chartered Young Tigers National U 16 Cricket Competition at the City Club ground yesterday.

Rafsan was the other notable scorer with 79. Shamim claimed two wickets for 41 runs.

In the second semifinal, Chittagong made 89 for four in the rain-interrupted match against Sylhet at the Dhanmondi Cricket Stadium.

Anisur Rahman top scored 30. Ratul Ferdous picked up two wickets for 17 runs and Rashed Ali captured two for nine runs.

**MANIKGANJ CRICKET**  
Our Correspondent adds: Bangladesh Cricket Academy and School (BCAS) defeated Victoria Club by a whopping 161-run