



PHOTO: STAR
Action from yesterday's Green Delta Insurance Premier Division Super League match between Abahani and Sonali Bank at the Maulana Bhasani Hockey Stadium.

Abahani stay alive

Hockey

SPORTS REPORTER

Having survived a second-half scare, titans Abahani edged past Sonali Bank 2-1 in their penultimate match of the Green Delta Insurance Premier Division Hockey Super League at the Maulana Bhasani National Stadium yesterday.

Pakistani Tariq Aziz and Moshir Rahman Biplob scored one goal each for Abahani while Rana Jubair Riaz pulled one back for the bankers in an entertaining second-half of the game.

And to keep their title hopes alive, Abahani had no alternative but to winning the game against a side they handed a 4-2 defeat in the first-leg and the Dhammondi-based outfit took a deserved lead in the 10th minute when Tariq found the board with a fierce hit after being set up by compatriot Modasser Ali Khan. Pakistani forward Modasser was also the provider of the second goal and this time an unmarked Biplob doubled the advantage in the 14th minute.

But, Abahani soon lost control of the

midfield to be forced to go on the defensive and Sonali Bank pulled one goal back six minutes from the break when Riaz converted a well-planned penalty corner.

The second-half was an ill-tempered affair, with the players from both sides pushing umpire on a few occasions whenever the decision went against them and surprisingly the Malaysian umpire did not warn any of players.

Abahani's title hopes would have been dashed even before facing Mohammedan on Saturday had they dropped a point yesterday. And probably that pressure came into play as Abahani's stick-wielders looked nervous in the face of a wave of attacks by the bankers. They even conceded a goal in the second-half, but instead the umpire ruled out the goal to award a penalty corner to Sonali Bank.

Abahani finally managed to keep their chances alive, but they are still three points short of Mohammedan who are leading the points table with 36.

Mohammedan need only a draw to regain the title since their last league triumph in 2000. The league will see a play-off game if Abahani can beat their archrivals in the last game.

Nat'l boxing semifinals today

SPORTS REPORTER

The semifinal lineups of all 11 categories in the Southeast Bank National Boxing Championship were completed yesterday when 28 players moved into the round of last four from their respective categories at the Mohammad Ali Boxing Stadium.

All the semifinals will take place today while the finals will be held tomorrow.

In the day's events, Tipu Sultan, Al Amin, Mizanur Rahman and Billal Hossain moved into the 48kg semifinals, Moshir Rahman, Asaduzzaman, Sujani Ali booked the semifinal seats of 51kg, Daud Hossain, Riad Hossain and Mohibullah reached the 58kg semifinals, Mohammad Ali, Arif Hossain and Hossain Ali moved into semifinals of 57kg category while Biplob confirmed his semifinal in 60kg category.

Pakistan on top

Cricket

AFP, Leeds

Umar Amin again belied his reputation as a part-time medium pacer to help Pakistan remain on top in the second Test against Australia at Headingley here on Thursday.

Australia were 62 for two in their second innings, still 108 runs behind, at tea on the second day.

Ricky Ponting, the Australia captain, survived a couple of lbw appeals while padding up to be 18 not out and Michael Clarke was unbeaten on two.

Opener Shane Watson, whose six wickets for 33 runs earlier in the day saw the medium-pacer to a Test-best bowling return for the second time in as many matches, helped Ponting add 40 for the second wicket.

But Watson, on 24, fell to an even more unheralded bowler than himself when, trying to cut Amin, who'd dismissed Marcus North in the first innings, he played on to leave Australia 55 for two.

Amin, at tea, had figures of one for six in four overs.

Australia had been shot out for just 88, after once more struggling against the swinging ball in overcast English conditions, on Wednesday.

It was their lowest Test total since the West Indies dismissed them for 76 Perth in 1984.

Australia's second innings at Headingley also began under grey skies.

And when opener Simon Katich was bowled round his legs, after shuffling across the crease in trademark fashion, by left-arm quick Mohammad Aamer, Australia were 15 for one.

And the 18-year-old Aamer, who took one wicket for 10 runs in five overs before tea, might have had Ponting lbw for nought when the star batsman padded up and played no stroke to an inswinger.

But Rudi Koertzen, in the South African's last Test as an umpire, ruled in Ponting's favour.

Watson, who took two wickets Wednesday, produced a post-lunch burst of four wickets for seven runs in 13 balls as Pakistan were bowled out for 258.

That still left Pakistan with a healthy first innings lead.

But Australia have won their last 13 Tests against Pakistan and in January triumphed by 36 runs at Sydney despite a first innings deficit of 206.

Medium-pacer Watson, who'd already taken two wickets on Wednesday, ripped through Pakistan's middle and lower order with a post-lunch burst of four wickets for seven runs in 13 balls.

The all-rounder's haul saw Watson surpass his previous best of five for 40 achieved in Australia's 150-run series-opening win at Lord's last week.

Pakistan 218 for five at lunch, were 222 for seven in the space of two Watson balls.

Kamran Akmal (15) was well caught low down at first slip by Marcus North and next ball Aamer was given out lbw, playing no stroke.

Soon afterwards, a Watson straight ball bowled tailender Umar Gul for nought before he dismissed Shoaib Malik, skying a catch to wicketkeeper Tim Paine after making 26 on his return to the side after former captain Shahid Afridi's post-Lord's resignation.

Danish Kaneria and Mohammad Asif added 24 at a run-a-ball for the last wicket before Kaneria was run out in farcical fashion after Pakistan had started a rain delayed second day on 148 for three.

SCORES IN BRIEF
AUSTRALIA: First innings 88 all out (Watson 5, Katich 13, Ponting 6, North 16, Paine 17, Smith 10; Aamer 3-20, Asif 3-30, Gul 2-16)
PAKISTAN: First innings 258 (Farhat 43, Butt 45, Azhar 30, Amin 25, Akmal 21, Malik 26; Hilfenhaus 2-77, Watson 6-33)
AUSTRALIA: Second innings 62 for 2 at tea (Watson 24, Katich 11, Ponting 18 not out)

Beximco champs

SPORTS REPORTER

Beximco Pharmaceuticals clinched title of the 5th Ascent Corporate 5-A-Side Indoor Soccer Tournament with an emphatic 3-0 win over IIDFC at the STM Hall of Scholastica School in Uttara.

It was the fourth consecutive triumph for Beximco as a record 48 corporate houses took part in the eight-day tournament that concluded on July 17 and the champions will participate in the Merchant Cup Futsal Tournament in India later this year.

Beximco captain Adil Ahmed scored highest 20 goals in the tournament.



TEN Sports & SuperSports5
Australia v Pakistan
Second Test, Day Three
Live from 3:30pm

Murali's octuple ton

FROM PAGE 17

arm remains bent in delivery and does not straighten.

A television experiment showed that even with his arm encased in a brace, Muralidaran could still spin the ball sharply both ways due to his powerful wrist and flexible right shoulder.

Muralidaran made his debut against Australia in the 1999 Oval Test gave him a record 48 corporate houses took part in the eight-day tournament that concluded on July 17 and the champions will participate in the Merchant Cup Futsal Tournament in India later this year.

Beximco captain Adil Ahmed scored highest 20 goals in the tournament.

one of the Wisden almanac's five cricketers of the 20th century, Muralidaran's fiercely devoted supporters believe he was the superior bowler.

A convincing case can be mounted for either man but the essential difference is style rather than effect.

Warne was a classicist, the best in a continuing line of Australian leg-spinners stretching from Clarrie Grimmett and Bill O'Reilly and including Richie Benaud.

Muralidaran is a romantic, a man who brought something completely new to his sport by bowling fierce off-spin with his wrist rather than the standard gentler version flicked off the index finger.

He became a complete bowler by adding the 'doosra', the delivery which spins away from the right-hander, allied to a top-spinner which both bounced and hurried on to the batsman.

The result is a man who can dip the ball wickedly in the air

and whip it both ways off the pitch and who at his peak was close to unplayable.

In a country split by sectarian strife, he has also been an exemplary representative of the Tamil people.

"He has taken much from the game of cricket, but he has given back so much to our society," his current captain Kumar Sangakkara said. "More than any other public figure in Sri Lanka, he stands apart."

Full name: Muttiah Muralidaran
Born: April 17, 1972, Kandy
Major teams: Sri Lanka, Asia XI, Chennai Super Kings, ICC World XI, Kandurata, Kent, Lancashire, Tamil Union Cricket and Athletic Club.
Playing Role: Right-arm off-break

HIGHEST WICKET-TAKERS				
Matches	Wickets			
M Muralidaran	133	800		
SK Warne	145	708		
A Kumble	132	619		
GD McGrath	124	563		
CA Walsh	132	519		

TEST BOWLING RECORD									
M	I	Balls	Wkts	BBI	BBM	Ave	SR	5w	10w
133	230	44039	800	9/51	16/220	22.72	55.0	67	22

Sri Lanka win huge

Cricket

CRICINFO, Galle

At the start of his final Test, he was eight wickets short of entering territory that no other cricketer had. He began his last day in Test cricket needing two, and took one. His partner threatened to take everything else and he could do nothing but keep on bowling, and wait. The umpire denied him a palpable lbw. VVS Laxman, who kept him at bay for so many hours, ran himself out and there was only one wicket left to take. He waited and perhaps even fretted. He nearly ran out the last pair himself, twice. After 23 wicketless overs, with perhaps growing doubt about whether it would come at all, the moment arrived, and Muttiah Muralidaran was there, where no man had gone before. The long wait for the 800th wicket only exemplified the toil that went into the preceding 799. And by the way, Sri Lanka won his farewell Test too, by ten wickets for the seventh time.

The script had tinges of romance and fiction. Lasith Malinga nearly didn't allow Murali to get to 800. The Indian tail-enders refused to relent, and it also threatened to rain. The real fight for the match, though, had ended in the first over of the day, when Malinga yorkeed Mahendra Singh Dhoni with a reversing outswinger. The ball seemed to drift towards leg but straightened at the last second to beat a clueless Dhoni and clutter into the stumps. Would Malinga knock out the tail before Murali got his two wickets? By design or otherwise,

Kumar Sangakkara stepped in and removed Malinga from the attack after only three overs.

Murali is 38. The wrists aren't as supple as they once were, the old fizz was certainly missing, the shoulder aches and the knees creak when he pivots. Yet he still produced magical deliveries and took a five-for in his last Test. On the fourth day, he removed Dhoni with a magical off-break and twice made Yuvraj Singh look like a tail-ender. Today, he didn't have to do anything special and just remain patient. The temptation to produce something magical, something unplayable to reach the landmark would have been there but he didn't show it. Murali kept delivering off-breaks, the occasional doosra and varied his pace and trajectory.

Fielders crowded the bat, appeals were made and Murali trapped Harbhajan Singh in front. Abhimanyu Mithun offered unexpected resistance and time wore on. Malinga stayed out of the attack. India took the lead. Murali changed ends. The photographers kept clicking every time Murali bowled a ball and ran from end to end for better views. The television cameras continued to do extreme close-ups.

Then it happened. Malinga eventually returned to knock out Mithun with an inswinging yorker. Barring a delivery that was pushed well outside off, Malinga was on target ball after ball but Laxman and Ishant Sharma stood firm. He did the same when he returned to bowl at the last pair Ishant and Pragyan Ojha. It felt right. Malinga bowling wides might have seemed like he was giving Murali time. It was also slightly alarming. What if

Malinga took both wickets and Murali ended on 799? Perhaps there would be a touch of romance in that, if it happened, like the last-innings duck that left Bradman with an average of 99.94.

Sangakkara opted for the new ball, and Murali very nearly made his tryst with destiny. A ripping off break from round the stumps had Laxman in front but umpire Daryl Harper didn't budge. Perhaps he thought it was missing leg stump. There was more nail-biting drama after lunch.

And just when the fans watching began to fear it would not come, it did. Ojha edged a flighted off-break to slip where Mahela Jayawardene grabbed his 77th catch off Murali's bowling. Murali roared, his teammates hoisted him on their shoulders, his wife and mother jumped out of their seats, the crowd cheered and the fireworks exploded. All seemed well with the world.

SCORES IN BRIEF
SRI LANKA: First innings 520 for 8 declared (Paranavithana 111, Sangakkara 103, Herath 80 not out, Malinga 64; Mithun 4-105, Sharma 3-145)
INDIA: First innings 276 (Sehwag 109, Dravid 18, Yuvraj 52, Dhoni 33; Malinga 2-55, Muralidaran 5-63)
INDIA: Second innings 338 (Sehwag 31, Dravid 44, Tendulkar 84, Laxman 69, Mithun 24; Malinga 5-50, Muralidaran 3-128)
SRI LANKA: Second innings 96 for no loss (Paranavithana 23 not out, Dilshan 68 not out) Result: Sri Lanka won by 10 wickets. Man-of-the-match: Lasith Malinga.

Murali's grandiose exit

Cricket

AFP, Galle

World bowling record holder Muttiah Muralidaran was given a presidential send-off on Thursday after he retired with 800 wickets in the bag.

Sri Lankan President Mahinda Rajapakse flew in from the capital, Colombo, to the southern coastal town of Galle to briefly watch the first Test against India and presented Muralidaran a memento during the lunch break.

But Rajapakse had left by the time the off-spinner had last man Pragyan Ojha caught in the slips to achieve the landmark that terminated India's second innings in the

post-lunch session of the final day.

Hosts Sri Lanka went on to win the Test by 10 wickets to take the lead in the three-match series against the world's top-ranked side.

"I must thank His Excellency, the President, for taking time off to come and watch the match," Muralidaran said later.

"I also need to thank my family and my teammates, both past and present, without whose support I would not have achieved anything."

Muralidaran, 38, who has taken more Test (800) and one-day (515) wickets than any bowler in history, remains open to playing limited-overs games.

"I have spoken to the selectors and if they want me for the

World Cup next year, I will be available," he said.

Fireworks went off and the packed stands stood up to greet Sri Lanka's favourite cricketer son when the last wicket fell as teammates rushed to congratulate Muralidaran.

Some 15,000 fans, including Muralidaran's parents, his Indian wife, Madhimalar, and four-year old son, Naren, faced anxious moments before the landmark was achieved.

The spinner needed 23 overs to move from 799 to 800 following a doughty rearguard action by India, whose last three wickets added 141 runs after being 197-7 at one stage.

"Getting to 800 was not as important as winning the match," said Muralidaran. "By God's grace, both things happened which made it the greatest day of my life."

"But I assure you, you won't miss me much, because there are some very talented spinners in our country and they will serve the team well."

Muralidaran's controversial bent-arm action -- the result of an elbow deformity since birth -- helped him impart considerable turn and bounce to wreak havoc with the ball.

The 133-Test veteran claimed five wickets in an innings an astonishing 67 times, almost double the hauls of second-placed Australian Shane Warne, who achieved this on 37 occasions.

Muralidaran took 10 wickets or more in a Test 22 times. Warne, who follows the Sri Lankan in the all-time list with 708 wickets, managed that only 10 times.

The spinner said he held no grudges against those, especially Australian umpires Darrel Hair and Ross Emerson, who questioned his bowling action.

"Life is about forgiving and forgetting," he said. "They had a job to do and did what they thought was right. But I am grateful to the International Cricket Council for giving me a chance to prove my innocence."

The Sri Lankan's record haul of 800 Test wickets is unlikely to be broken in the near future. Among bowlers still playing Test cricket, India's Harbhajan Singh leads the pack with 355 wickets and New Zealand captain Daniel Vettori has 325 wickets.

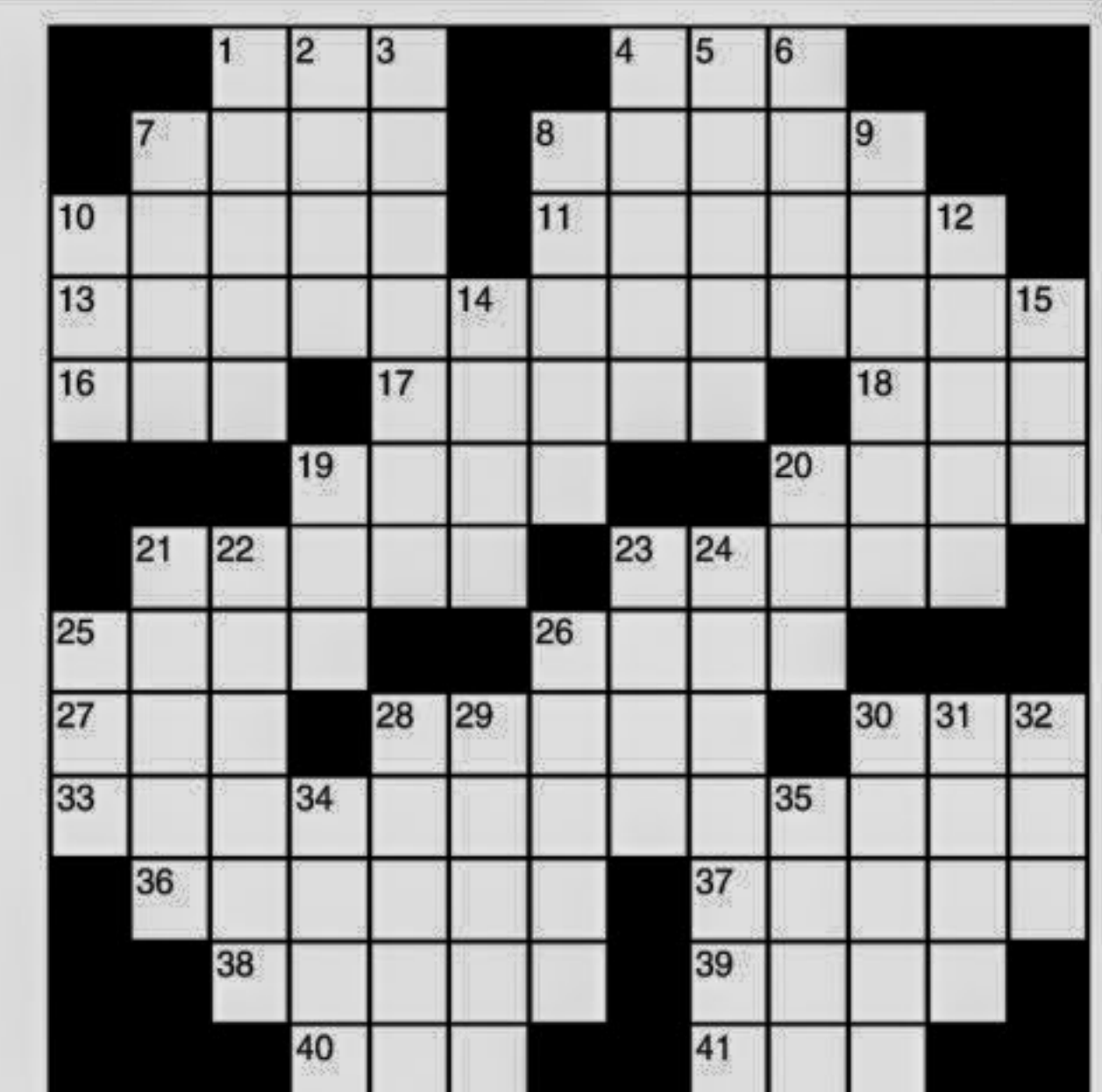
Among others present to bid farewell to Muralidaran were ICC chief executive Haroon Lorgat and top officials from Sri Lanka Cricket.



PHOTO: STAR
Members of the Bangladesh Rifles team celebrate with the trophy after beating Bangladesh Police in the Pubali Bank Premier Division Kabaddi League at the Outer Stadium yesterday.

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

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CRYPTOQUIP

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Yesterday's Cryptoquip: I JUST ADORE WEARING MOST TYPES OF GOLD JEWELRY. IT'S DEFINITELY ONE OF MY GILT-Y PLEASURES.
Today's Cryptoquip Clue: B equals A