

Frisk highlight of bright opening

Nepal run rampage

SPORTS REPORTER

ATIQUA ANAM from Cox's Bazar

The biggest footballing extravaganza for women in South Asia got underway at the seaside city of Cox's Bazar yesterday amidst much enthusiasm, fanfare, and some disorganization in the presence of the high priests of Asian and domestic football.

A colourful children's display started the proceedings of the tournament. Some 400 schoolchildren, clad in bright colors, performed to popular tunes. The children's display was followed by performances of up and coming local singers who kept the audience engaged.

Highups of the Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF), Asian Football Confederation (AFC) and FIFA representatives were all present to witness the occasion that marked the biggest sports event for the popular tourist destination of Cox's Bazar.

Worawi Makudi, Chairman of FIFA's Women's Football Committee, formally inaugurated the tournament.

Congratulating the BFF for hosting such a big scale tournament, Makudi said: "This tournament will not only create enthusiasm for football, but it will also provide rich entertainment for the locals. This will have a clear impact on women's football. But this venture needs to be carried on."

BFF president Kazi Salahuddin said that this tournament would, apart from supporting football, showcase Cox's Bazar as a safe and beautiful tourist destination to the people of the world. The football legend of the country also asked for time to take women's football to the grassroots level.

Manila Fernando, Vice President SAFF & AFC and Alberto Colosso, General Secretary of SAFF was also present.

However amidst all these glittering names,



one Swedish football star stole the limelight.

Johana Frisk, Swedish defender and former teammate of Brazilian legend Marta at LA SOL, paraded the ground to encourage local women in the game.

A former member of the U23 Swedish national team and a three-time Swedish League champion, Frisk said she was glad



Special guest, Swedish international defender Johanna Frisk (L) watches the opening match of the SAFF Women's Championship between Nepal and Maldives at Cox's Bazar yesterday. Nepal won 6-0 as the biggest football extravaganza for women in the region kicked-off amidst much fanfare.

PHOTOS: COURTESY/BANGLAR CHOKH

to come to Bangladesh and wished that women's football of this region progresses day by day.

"It's never too late to start. It's a good thing that women's football has started here and now it should be held on a regular basis to keep up the good work," said the 24-year-old.

However, amidst all this talk of hope and goodwill, the sign of mismanagement and unpreparedness was strikingly visible.

The VIP box and the adjacent press box lacked the touch of many modern day facilities. The makeshift press box failed to accommodate local journalists after catering for the one's from the capital.

The main performer of the opening ceremony missed her flight from Dhaka to the dismay of the locals. The disorganization reached its pinnacle when players had to wait for an embarrassingly long time before the national anthems come into effect.

To top it all, the game also started 15 minutes later than scheduled.

Napoli in heady company

AFP, Rome

Napoli coach Walter Mazzarri told his players to ignore the Serie A standings after they went second with a hard-fought 1-0 victory at Genoa.

Napoli will lose second spot to either Lazio or Juventus before the weekend is over but the victory, and indeed the manner of it, at a notoriously difficult venue suggested Napoli are perhaps ready to take the next step.

Slovakia midfielder Marek Hamsik scored the only goal of the game, heading home a free-kick from Walter Gargano

RESULTS

Palermo 3 (Pinilla 51, Miccoli 61, Zaccardo 89-og) Parma 1 (Lucarelli 7)
Udinese 2 (Armero 53, Di Natale 80)
Fiorentina 1 (Santana 31)
Genoa 0 **Napoli 1** (Hamsik 25)

after only 25 minutes.

But thereafter Napoli were forced to hang on grimly and they survived several goalmouth scares in the second half before sealing the three points.

And yet this, one of their best wins of the season, came without influential forward Ezequiel Lavezzi.

"We'll try to keep approaching games the way we did (on Saturday), on a difficult pitch, against a tough team," said Mazzarri.

Nasri bullish about MU date

AFP, London

Samir Nasri believes Old Trafford is not the intimidating venue it once was and that Arsenal should not fear taking on Manchester United on Monday.

Arsenal last won at Old Trafford in September 2006, but Nasri believes Sir Alex Ferguson's team do not possess the same aura of invincibility they once had.

"For me Manchester United is not the same team as before, with Cristiano Ronaldo and Tevez it was a little bit scary to play at Old Trafford," Nasri declared.

Nasri took his season's tally to 12 goals with another well-executed strike in the midweek Champions League win over Partizan Belgrade.

The 23-year-old - who had a spell on the sidelines earlier in the season following knee surgery - believes his absence from the France's ill-fated World Cup squad proved to be a positive.

Liverpool Hammered

AFP, London



Manchester City moved up to second place in the Premier League on Saturday with a 3-1 victory at West Ham as Newcastle beat Liverpool by the same score to get new manager Alan Pardew's reign off to a dream start.

Strikes from Yaya Toure, Adam Johnson and a Robert Green own goal secured three precious points for City, who now trail Arsenal by goal difference ahead of the Gunners' visit to Manchester United on Monday.

Toure opened the scoring after 30 minutes, the Ivory Coast midfielder combining with England international

Gareth Barry to rifle an unstoppable shot past Hammers keeper Green.

Toure was responsible for City's second goal on 73 minutes, surging into the West Ham penalty box and firing a low shot which cannoned off the post and into the net off the desperately unlucky Green's back.

Johnson -- who had come on as a substitute to replace Mario Balotelli after the vola-

RESULTS

Aston Villa 2 (Downing 25, Heskey 80)
West Brom 1 (Scharer 89)
Everton 0 Wigan 0
Fulham 0 Sunderland 0
Newcastle 3 (Nolan 15, Barton 80, Carroll 90) Liverpool 1 (Kuyt 49)
Stoke 0 **Blackpool 1** (Campbell 48)
West Ham 1 (Tomkins 89) **Man City 3**

tile Italian striker earned a booking for dissent -- completed the scoring with a well-taken effort on 81 minutes.

West Ham defender James Tomkins scored a late consolation for West Ham, heading in from a corner on 89 minutes. The defeat left the Hammers bottom on goal difference, four points adrift of safety.

In Saturday's late match, Newcastle midfielder Joey Barton and Andy Carroll scored in the last 10 minutes as the Magpies beat Liverpool 3-1 to the delight of Pardew, controversially appointed as successor to the sacked Chris Hughton earlier this week.

Barton scrambled in an 80th minute effort to give Newcastle a 2-1 lead before Carroll launched a 25-yard exocet to make the game safe.

The goals shattered Liverpool, who had fought their way back into the game with a Dirk Kuyt equaliser after Newcastle skipper Kevin Nolan had given the home side the lead on 15 minutes.

"It's been a long two or three days," said Pardew. "It was a great victory and not many teams can score three against Liverpool."

Elsewhere Saturday, goals were thin on the ground with Everton being held to a goalless draw against Wigan at Goodison as Fulham and Sunderland finished 0-0 at Craven Cottage.

At Villa Park goals from Stewart Downing and Emile Heskey eased the pressure on Aston Villa manager Gerard Houllier as the Birmingham club snatched a nervy 2-1 victory over West Bromwich Albion.

Houllier had angered Villa

fans with his behaviour during Villa's abject 3-0 defeat at Liverpool on Monday, which led to the Frenchman issuing an apology to supporters ahead of their meeting with the Baggies.

However Downing set Villa on the way to ending their four-match losing streak in all competitions when he got on the end of a Marc Albrighton cross to open the scoring on 25 minutes.

Veteran striker Heskey, playing his first match since October after undergoing surgery on an injured knee ligament, made sure of the points for Villa on 80 minutes.

Promoted Blackpool meanwhile maintained their proud away record with a 1-0 victory over Stoke at the Britannia Stadium which fired the Tangerines into the top half of the table.

Aguero puts Atletico back on track

AFP, Madrid



A brace by Sergio Aguero led Atletico Madrid to a 2-0 victory over Deportivo La Coruna on Saturday to put them back on track in the hunt for a European place following rivals Villarreal's shock 1-0 defeat by nine-man Getafe.

Atletico had fallen off the pace following three straight defeats but they were always in charge against a Deportivo side that has stuttered especially away from home.

It was Aguero's night as he first won a penalty after being upended by keeper Daniel Aranzubia although Diego Forlan missed the follow-up spot-kick.

But Aguero then found the back of the net with a jinking run and shot, before adding to it ten minutes before half time.

Atletico are now up to sixth in the table but they are still seven points adrift of Villarreal who crashed 1-0 away to nine-man Getafe.

Juan Albin fired home in the dying minutes. Daniel Diaz had already been dismissed and Albin was given a second yellow card for taking his shirt off when celebrating his goal.

Despite the red cards, Villarreal coach Juan Carlos Garrido still felt the referee cost them the game.

"There were too many stoppages which favoured Getafe as they organised their game to counter-attack. We needed there to be fluidity in the match," he said.

Lowly Almeria produced an inspired performance to beat Sevilla 3-1 and pile the pressure on the troubled Andalusian side. It was the first victory for new coach Jose Luis Oltra on his third attempt after taking charge following Almeria's 8-0 thrashing by Barcelona last month.

RESULTS

Getafe 1 (Albin 90) Villarreal 0
Sevilla 1 (Kanoute 83) **Almeria 3**
(Vargas 48, Piatti 81, 90+1)
Atletico Madrid 2 (Aguero 8, 35)



Borussia Dortmund midfielder Nuri Sahin (L) runs off to celebrate after scoring a wonderful free-kick in their Bundesliga match against Werder Bremen at Dortmund on Sunday.

PHOTO: AFP

Irresistible Dortmund

AFP, Berlin



German league leaders Dortmund picked up their seventh straight win on Saturday with a 2-0 victory over Bremen, while Bayern Munich were boosted by midfielder star Bastian Schweinsteiger committing to the club until 2016.

A superbly struck free-kick after nine minutes by

Dortmund's Turkey midfielder Nuri Sahin put the leaders ahead before Poland striker Robert Lewandowski

RESULTS

Bayern Munich 3 (Hamit Altintop 16, Lahm 71-pen, Ribery 79) St. Pauli 0
Hamburg 2 (Vidal 48-og, Elia 79) Bayer
Leverkusen 4 (Sam 30, Vidal 61, Renato Augusto 66, 78)
Hoffenheim 1 (Compper 55)
Nuremberg 1 (Eigler 87)
Cologne 1 (Clemens 56)
Eintracht Frankfurt 0
Kaiserslautern 0 VfL Wolfsburg 0
Borussia Dortmund 2 (Sahin 9,

netted in the 70th minute as Dortmund took all three points.

It was their 14th win from 16 games with their only defeat coming on the first day of the season back in August.

"We started very well, but after Bremen played well," said Dortmund coach Jurgen Klopp. "That was really hard work. Overall, we deserved the win."

The result leaves Dortmund 11 points clear of second-placed Leverkusen, but Mainz can close the gap back to 10 if they beat Schalke on Sunday.

Defending champions

Bayern remain 17 points behind the leaders, but they were buoyed by Schweinsteiger's announcement of his new deal which followed their 3-0 win over 10-man St Pauli.

With Schweinsteiger's contract set to expire in 2012, the 26-year-old has signed a four-year extension and looks set to end his career in Munich, dealing a blow to a host of reported suitors including Real Madrid.

Bayern sealed victory when France midfielder Franck Ribery rounded St Pauli's

Tevez wants out?

AFP, London

Controversial striker Carlos Tevez wants to leave Manchester City and has handed in a transfer request, it was reported here Sunday.

The News of the World claimed that the 26-year-old Argentine international, who has endured a rocky relationship with manager Roberto Mancini, has asked to leave the Eastlands club.

Tevez is understood to be homesick and is not happy being so far away from his two daughters, who live in Argentina.

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'My heart is Red'

AFP, Munich



Bayern Munich fans had double cause to celebrate Saturday's 3-0 home win over St Pauli as Germany star Bastian Schweinsteiger announced he had signed a contract extension until 2016.

The deal comes after reports had linked the 26-year-old with Real Madrid and Manchester United.

With microphone in hand, Schweinsteiger kissed the Bayern badge on his chest after telling his side's fans at Munich's Allianz Arena: "It is the best solution for both sides. My heart is here. My heart is red."

The news is a big boost for Bayern's bosses as Germany defender Philipp Lahm also pledged his future to Munich earlier this autumn by signing a deal which keeps him in Bavaria until at least 2016.

Schweinsteiger said he made the decision to stay in Germany in the hope of success with both club and country having made his Munich debut in 2002.

"It would be nicer to win the Champions League here than with Real Madrid," he said.

"We are on the right track with our trainer and doing well in Europe. This is the best long-term solution."



SCHWEINSTEIGER

SPORTS POLL

WEEKLY QUESTION

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