

WOMEN'S HANDBALL
Ansar, BJMC reach final

SPORTS REPORTER

Defending champions Bangladesh Ansar and re-rolled Bangladesh Jute Mills Corporation (BJMC) moved into the final of the Exim Bank 21st National Women's Handball Championship beating respective rivals in semifinals at the Handball Stadium yesterday.

The final is held tomorrow while the losing sides of the semifinals play in the place-deciding match today at the same venue.

Bangladesh Ansar dominated Dhaka from the outset to take a comfortable 10-5 first-half lead before posting an easy 18-10 win in the first semifinal. Shahida and Bhulu scored eight and five goals respectively for the winners while Sathi and Jolly scored three goals each.

In the second semifinal, BJMC thrashed Dhaka University by a massive 23-6 margin as the winners proved too strong for the amateurs of Dhaka University and by end of the first-half they took a commanding 16-3 lead in the one-way traffic.

ASIAN BEACH GAMES

Khaled 4th

SPORTS REPORTER

Saifullah Khaled finished fourth in bodybuilding event of the 2nd Asian Beach Games in Mascot, Oman after he scored 40 in the final round of 85kg category.

Abu Sayeed Mollah became sixth in the 75kg category, said a press release of Bangladesh Olympic Association yesterday.

Bangladesh women's kabaddi team, which earned bronze medal in Asian Games, started their campaign on a losing note after suffering a 45-67 defeat to Thailand on Sunday. Bangladesh were scheduled to play their second match against favourites India yesterday night while they will play their third match against Indonesia tomorrow.

Meanwhile, Bangladesh is only participating in bodybuilding and women's kabaddi.

BD win five medals in Goju-Rye karate

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh has won two silver and three bronze medals in the just concluded 3rd Asian Goju-Rye Karate Championships, which was held in Nepal from December 2 to 4.

Raju Rai won silver in -45kg category. Kamrun Nahar also won silver in +60kg weight category while Gobinda Sarkar, Shree Jeet Dutta and Animesh Sarkar won bronze medals in their respective events, said a Goju-Rye Karate Association press release yesterday.

'Those money were all mine'

AFP, London

Former Pakistan captain Salman Butt has said thousands of pounds of cash discovered by police searches of his hotel room during spot-fixing inquiries was all part of his legitimate tour allowances.

Butt and pacemen Mohammad Asif and Mohammad Aamer were all provisionally suspended by the International Cricket Council (ICC) following allegations resulting from a 'sting' operation conducted by Britain's News of the World newspaper that they'd all conspired in the bowling of deliberate no-balls as part of a betting scam during the fourth Test against England at Lord's in August.

Focus now

getting back among the runs but his strike rate of 53.30 is really a cause for concern because the things will be totally different when Bangladesh play against their higher ranked opponents.

The selectors also seemed to have a plan with Mohammad Ashraful but it didn't click as the right-hander made a foolish error in the first game only to stay in the dressing room for the rest of the series.

Shakib had said that they had enough back-up players but unfortunately there was little chance to glimpse them in the just concluded series against Zimbabwe.



An Ansar marksman is about to shy at the goal during their 21st National Women's Handball Championship match against Dhaka at the Handball Stadium yesterday. Ansars won 18-10.

PHOTO: STAR

Dan takes the blame

Cricket

AGENCIES, Wellington

Dejected after the embarrassing ODI series whitewash against India, New Zealand skipper Daniel Vettori on Monday said senior players, including himself, will have to take the blame for the debacle.

"It's about players standing up and performing, Vettori told ONE News on the team's return to the country after a 0-5 drubbing in India.

"If we look at the reasons for the losses being because of selection or management structure we are absolving the players and myself included -- so the players need to stand up," said the talismanic leg-spinner, who has been leading the side since 2007.

Set to take a break to nurse a sore back, Vettori rejected suggestions that his multiple roles of being a captain, selector and key all-

rounder were affecting the team's power balance.

Vettori said his teammates are "comfortable" with his multiple roles but conceded that the fans might be running out of patience considering that his side has now lost 11 one-day international matches on the trot.

"Yeah, of course I don't blame them. This team is hurting itself. It's a miserable time for New Zealand cricket," Vettori said.

"We did so well in the first couple of Test matches and then to let it all slip in the last Test and the one-day series, it hurts. And the only reason you play the game is to win and the only reason a lot of New Zealanders watch us play is to see us win.

"So we have to give that to them as soon as possible or otherwise it's going to be really upsetting to a lot of people," he added.

Kiwi coach Mark Greatbatch echoed Vettori's views and said the team is "exceptionally disappointed and embarrassed."

Sagar takes lone lead

SPORTS REPORTER

National champion FM Minhazuddin Ahmed Sagar took a solo lead in the 8th Amritolal Jayasuriya international rating chess tournament at close of sixth round held in Barisal yesterday.

Sagar has now collected maximum six points from as many games.

FM Aminul Islam and Jamal Uddin shared the second position with five points each while five players -- FM Syed Mahfuzur Rahman Emon, Shafiq Ahmed, Chanchal Kumar Ghosh, Delwar Hossain and Mohammad Sagar -- were jointly in the third position.

Jayasuriya, Vaas in WC probables

AGENCIES, Colombo

Sri Lanka picked veterans Sanath Jayasuriya and Chaminda Vaas in a preliminary squad for next year's World Cup.

Sri Lanka Cricket released a list of 29 players Monday, of which 15 will be selected for the final squad.

Jayasuriya's 20-year international career looked to be over after a poor World Twenty20 competition earlier this year, in which the left-hander scored 15 runs in six matches.

The setback drew wide criticism from cricket fans but the batsman, who is also a ruling party lawmaker, vowed to return to play at the World Cup.

Jayasuriya, who has scored 13,428 runs in 444 one-day internationals, played his last match nearly a year ago.

Vaas, a left-arm seam bowler, has not played an ODI in nearly 30 months.

Warne calls laughable

Cricket

AFP, Perth

England coach Andy Flower Monday laughed off suggestions champion leg-spinner Shane Warne could make a shock Ashes comeback as Australia become increasingly desperate to find a way to win back the prized urn.

The Warne sideshow has reached fever pitch in Australia as the once dominant cricket nation contemplates a worrying 1-0 deficit after two Ashes Tests, leading to growing calls for the 41-year-old to return in the Boxing Day Test at the MCG in Melbourne.

Just after Warne was romantically linked to English model and occasional film star Liz Hurley and also announced that he had again split with his wife Simone, with whom he has three children, there were a swathe of questions about a possible comeback at press conferences held by both the Australian and English camps.

Speaking ahead of the third Test at the WACA ground in Perth, starting on Thursday, Flower laughed off any thought of Warne resuming his 145-Test career after almost four years out of the game.

"I am not surprised that it won't go away," he said of the Warne speculation with a broad grin. "But it is not going to happen."

Australian debutant Michael Beer, who will become the 10th spinner tried by

Australia since Warne's retirement, also dismissed talk of a comeback by the legend. "They bring that up three times a year, don't they?" he said.

Flower also dismissed suggestions that the off-field behaviour of Warne's good friend, Kevin Pietersen, was a potential distraction for England as they close in on a successful Ashes defence.

A win in Perth would not ensure a historic series victory, but it would guarantee England would retain the Ashes regardless of what happened in the final two Tests.

Pietersen has been reprimanded by team management in recent days for inappropriate comments on his Twitter account, and was also fined for speeding in a Lamborghini arranged by Warne last Wednesday.

The Australians openly claimed before the series that they believed Pietersen would be a disruptive influence, but the big right-hander made a double century in Adelaide.

"The tweet has been dealt with and Kevin has been reminded of his responsibilities," said Flower.

"The speeding fine is a personal issue that bears little relation to anything that happens in the team.

"We all have to recognise our responsibilities and he is no different in that regard."

The English players were joined by their wives, partners and children on Monday and Flower said he was confident their arrival would not be a distraction for a side yet to taste defeat on the tour.

Van Zyl relies on record

Cricket

IANS, Johannesburg

India's Test series with South Africa beginning at Centurion Thursday spiced up with the home coach Corrie van Zyl reminding the visitors of their poor record here and saying that getting used to pace and bouncy conditions would not be easy.

Van Zyl, however, said they are not 'underestimating' the world's top Test side which is riding high on form.

"They [India] are an experienced team with much depth regarding their batting and bowling, but the record books never lie."

"We don't pay much attention to what the Indian goals are in the series, but rather concentrate on what is ahead of us," van Zyl said.

"This Indian team is not number one in the Test rankings for nothing. They've played very good cricket over the last couple of years and that's why they are number one."

"However, playing in South Africa under very different conditions is something else and that's one of the reasons they came a bit earlier to get used to the conditions," he said.

India have a poor record in South Africa with just one win in 12 Tests. The victory came here in 2006 when they beat the hosts by a convincing 123 runs, but lost the series, going down in the next two Tests.

Indian coach Gary Kirsten said the current team will draw confidence from their recent form.

"If you look at our performances and results over the past two years, you can understand why we are the number one team," said Kirsten, a former South African opener.

Van Zyl said it will boil down to who handles

the pace and bounce better.

"Obviously, the South African team is mindful of the Indian team. If we think the Indian team doesn't have a bowling attack that can bowl well on bouncy wickets, then we are mistaken."

"Again, it's about who handles the pace and the bounce best. That's what's important and what we will see by the end of the Test series."

Much has been said about South Africa giving a green top and relying on their fast bowlers -- Dale Steyn, Morne Morkel and Wayne Parnell -- to do the rest.

"We're not going to give them turning tracks here. That's not going to happen, but we would be stupid to underestimate the Indian bowlers," said van Zyl.

"We're going to play on wickets which are going to benefit our style of play, but it is one thing playing on them, it's another thing executing."

India would be eyeing their first series win in South Africa with a strong batting line-up boasting of Virender Sehwag, Gautam Gambhir, Sachin Tendulkar, Rahul Dravid and VVS Laxman.

Van Zyl said they have not made any specific plans for individuals.

"It's an excellent Indian team which comes to our shores, but as far as individuals are concerned, if you're talking about a very good Indian team, then you can't single out individuals."

"They're not number one because of one individual, they're number one because they're a very good unit. If we're going to look at one or two individuals we're going to miss the boat here. We're making sure that we're not focused on one individual. We're preparing for the whole Indian team," he said.

He also said that Graeme Smith, who broke his left hand ring finger in the first ODI against Pakistan in the UAE in November, has been cleared to play the first Test.

Australia do the double

FROM PAGE 17

undefeated, as they were one of two teams in the Super Six not to have a point to their name, as they had lost their group matches against the other Group B qualifiers, New Zealand and Pakistan.

The team under Steve Waugh was awesome. Opening their batting were the supremely elegant Mark Waugh and the equally belligerent Adam Gilchrist. Mark Waugh was the fourth highest scorer in the Cup, and though Gilchrist was not at his best in the tournament, he was invaluable, providing quick starts and lending the side crucial balance with his wicketkeeping. The middle order was made up of Ricky Ponting, Steve Waugh, Darren Lehmann and Michael Bevan.

Steve Waugh was the second highest run-scorer of the tournament, and Australia would not have progressed beyond the Super Six stage without his unbeaten 120 against South Africa in the last game before the semis. Tom Moody, and for some matches Brendan Julian and Shane Lee, were the allrounders of the side. It was necessary to have seam-bowling allrounders to exploit the seaming pitches in England.

Their bowling, along with Pakistan's, was the strongest of the tournament. The frontline bowlers were the metronome Glenn McGrath, spin wizard Shane Warne and swing specialist Damien Fleming. McGrath was the second highest wicket-taker of the tournament with 18 wick-

ets. Shane Warne took four wickets each in the semifinal and final. The steady fast-medium bowler Paul Reiffel played in six matches including the final.

With this team, Australia's mental strength came to the fore. After losing two of the first three games, they won five on the trot to qualify for the semis, where against South Africa in one of the greatest matches in one-day history ended in a tie with Damien Fleming bowling a sensational last over. Australia went through on the strength of their win against South Africa in the Super Six stage and blew away Pakistan in the final to become only the second team after the West Indies to win two World Cups.

Hosts start well

FROM PAGE 17

the scoreline remained unchanged. The winners were given a huge ovation by the 10,000-strong when they went on a victory lap.

Captain Trishna Chakma said they were confident about winning the game: "We beat them [Sri Lanka] in the SA Games, so we were confident of winning here too. Everyone did their job. We are happy to start with a win in the month of victory."

The coach Golam Rabbani Choton said the team played well for most of the game apart from a period in the second half when they got themselves under a bit of pressure.

"This is a tough group and this was a very important match. We had no alternative but to win, which we accomplished. We always played with attacking intent and hopefully we will win our next matches as well," said Choton.

The Sri Lankan coach Chaminda Neil blamed injury to two of his most important players during the game for defeat.

Meanwhile, favourites India humiliated

minnows Bhutan with a staggering 18-0 defeat in the first match of the day. The winners added eight goals after going for breather with a 10-0 scoreline. Sasmita Malik scored an amazing seven goals, Bala Devi bagged five and captain Tababi Devi four while Gayatri Mallick and Pinky Bompal added one each for the winners.

There are two matches to be played today, in the first match Pakistan will take on Maldives while favourites Nepal will play against Afghanistan in the later match.

TEAMS
BANGLADESH: Sabina Akter, Trishna Chakma, Farhana Khatun, Suravi Akter, Khaleida Khatun, Maynu Marma, Nuby Ching Marma, Suinu Pru Marma, Jahanara Akter, Sabina Khatun, Aung Mrachin Marma.
SRI LANKA: Shanika Rajapaksha, Basika Rammi, Malkanthi Abeykoon, Ishara Madushani, Hasara Dillangi, K Angela, Malisha Iddagoda, Hashini Anyaratne, Shehani Hapuarachchi, Diki Kulatunga, Deepthi Fernando.

Up close with Frisk

FROM PAGE 17

of rolled into me. I like them the way they play, even though they have a strong defence, they always attack and they never give up. In fact I am a big fan of English football because it's a fast and hard game.

Roy Keane is my icon, for the leadership that he brought on the field. He was unbelievable as a leader and a great influence on the field. My favourite player now is Vidic, I like his game a lot for his grit and die-hard attitude.

DSS: Who is a better player for you? Messi or Ronaldo?

JF: If I should choose between them I would pick

Messi, because when he plays he gives his everything whether he plays for Barcelona or Argentina.

DSS: You share your birthday with a great central defender of modern times, Alessandro Nesta.

JF: Oh my god! Is it? When I was in the school team, they asked us who wants to be the next Nesta (in Swedish nesta means next). That's when I knew who he was. When I was growing up, he was such an idol. He has been a great player for so many years holding such a high position.

DSS: Your life apart from football?

JF: Well, football is my life. I've been playing football for the last 10 years, and have been a professional footballer for the last seven years. So, I can't think about anything except football.

DSS: Your favourite pastime?

JF: Since I travel a lot, I watch a lot of movies. I like all sorts of films apart from sci-fi which seems so unreal. No particular favourite actors/actresses though.

DSS: What about music?

JF: I like Michael Jackson, he's been my favourite since I was a child. I used to dance in front of the TV to MJ's songs.

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

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|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| ACROSS | 37 Serengeti | DOWN | 20 Fresh |
| 1 Allow | 39 Architect | 1 Joel's | 23 Gilligan's home |
| 4 Cattle-drive item | 40 Midafternoon, | "Cabaret" | 24 Golf bag gadgets |
| 8 Wharf | 41 Yule | co-star | 25 Chops |
| 12 UN workers' agcy. | 42 Hayseed | 2 Ht. | 26 Expert |
| 13 Hayseed | 43 Incite | 3 Pith | 27 Green acres? |
| 14 Incite | 44 Airship | helmet | 28 Spill the beans |
| 15 Airship | 45 Part of the loop | 4 Old Roman magistrate | 29 Press for payment |
| 17 Part of the loop | 46 Fly | 5 Monarch | 32 Fixed a ring, perhaps |
| 18 Fly | 47 Hostel | 6 Sapporo sash | 33 "Bounty" captain |
| 19 Hostel | 48 Neither mate | 7 Dweller | 35 Skater Babilonia |
| 21 Neither mate | 49 High point | 8 "Zorba the Greek" star | 36 "Scat!" |
| 22 High point | 50 Bowling | 9 Ode to inspirer | 38 Severity |
| 26 Bowling | 51 Hall-of-Famer | 10 In olden days | 39 Danger |
| 29 Dawn droplets | 52 Jack and Jill's course | 11 Longing | 42 Durante trademark |
| 30 Witness | 53 Stocking woe | 16 Do the den walls | 43 Cather's "One of —" |
| 31 Jack and Jill's course | 54 Lotion | | 44 Clench |
| 32 Stocking woe | 55 Intentionally | | 45 Short trip |
| 33 Lotion | 401(k) | | 46 Spoon-bender Geller |
| 34 401(k) | alternat- | | 47 Born |
| 35 X rating? | 36 Con- | | 49 Historic time |
| 36 Con- | crate | | |

Solution time: 25 mins.



Abahani's footballers pose for a team photo session at the club premises before leaving for Thailand yesterday to play two practice matches against local clubs.

PHOTO: STAR

CRYPTOQUIP

D F E U J O F M K F W V S S F B D U S S

V P P X E X U S X O Y F I L X W F Y V P

O V C F M K X R Q . C X Q K M U

I F L O V R O U B K F ' O D F - L F P P F Y ?

Yesterday's Cryptoquip: HAD SHE NOT EATEN

HER FOOD AS DIRECTED, I WOULD CLAIM LITTLE

MISS MUFFET WAS A WHEYWARD YOUTH.

Today's Cryptoquip Clue: V equals O