

Border Guard retains kabaddi title

SPORTS REPORTER

Border Guard of Bangladesh defended their National Kabaddi Championship title when they handed a 19-16 defeat to Bangladesh Police at the Kabaddi Stadium yesterday.

Hasan Mahmud Khandaker, IGP and president of Bangladesh Kabaddi Federation, handed over the prizes after the final. Chowdhury MAQ Sarwar, head of legal compliance and assurance of the sponsors Standard Chartered Bank and AKM Mukitir Rahman, vice-president of the federation were present among others at the prize distribution ceremony.

British PM hails the heroes

AFP, London

British Prime Minister David Cameron congratulated the England cricket team for their "brilliant performance" after they crushed Australia in the fourth Test on Wednesday to retain the Ashes.

"Congratulations to the England team and Captain Andrew Strauss on a brilliant performance Down Under," said Cameron in a statement from his office.

"Retaining The Ashes for the first time in almost a quarter of a century marks a very special end to the year for sports fans and a great late Christmas present for the country."

"I look forward to welcoming them to Downing Street when they return."

England scored an emphatic 157-run victory over Australia in the fourth Test at the Melbourne Cricket Ground.

WUKF karate next month

SPORTS REPORTER

The Begum Fazilatunnesa 3rd Inter-continental WUKF Karate Competition will be held at the Shaheed Soharwardi Indoor Stadium in Dhaka from January 25 to 30.

The competition will be organized by Bangladesh Marshal Art Confederation and World Union of Karatedo Federation and will be sponsored by Mercantile Bank.

A colourful opening ceremony will be held at the Indoor Stadium on the evening of January 27 which will be followed by a fireworks display.

V-Day hockey

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh Army edged out Bangladesh Air Force 2-1 in their match of the Dhaka Bank Victory Day Hockey Competition at the Maulana Bhasani Hockey Stadium yesterday.

Hamid and Enamul scored for the winners while Dinse Ali scored the consolation goal for the losing side.

In the other match of the day, Baikal Singh of Rajshahi blanked Barnak Samaj by 6-0 goals.

Amla recalled for Twenty20

CRICINFO

Hashim Amla's good form has earned him a recall to South Africa's 12-man squad for the one-off Twenty20 international against India in Durban.

The game will also be Makhaya Ntini's last in South Africa colours. Jacques Kallis, Dale Steyn and Morne Morkel have been rested while opener Loots Bosman has made way for Amla.

Pakistan win

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coach and to see him sacked after our win against Pakistan, it was indeed sad.

DSS: Tell us about the Pakistan win...

AI: We never really thought we could beat such a big team with such ease. We hadn't tasted a win like that one before. So yes, it was very special; plus they won all the previous matches. The moment I realized we are going to win was after they had lost the fourth wicket. Our bowling and fielding were really good that day so I was being confident.

I think we improved as a team everyday in that tournament.



A St Joseph's player tries to gain control of the ball during their 4-3 defeat of Sena Palli High School in the Dhaka Metropolis School football tournament at the Birshreshtha Mostafa Kamal Stadium yesterday.

School football back

SPORTS REPORTER



After a four year hiatus, budding booters finally got a chance to play competitive football as the third edition of the Dhaka Metropolis School Football Tournament got underway yesterday at the Birshreshtha Shaheed Mostafa Kamal Stadium.

In the opening match, St Joseph High School defeated Sena Palli High School 4-3 in a tiebreaker after regulation time ended in a 1-1 draw.

But the start of the tournament provides a chance to reflect on the state of the game for school kids in the country. It seems that the boys are not as lucky as their female counterparts, as the Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) is seemingly interested in a regular Dhaka Metropolis Women's School tournament instead of a boys tournament, which has previously produced players like Shaheedul Alam who played for Abahani and the national side.

The Kazi Salahuddin-led football committee have held three successive women's school tournament since their inception in 2008 but this is the first time they have started the Dhaka Metropolis School (Boys) tournament, which was last held in 2005. The first-ever Dhaka Metropolis School tournament was held in 2003 under the supervision of former footballer

Ashrafuddin Ahmed Chunnun. Speaking to the young players yesterday, their sentiment was very clear; they all wanted football to take place regularly as it would give them a chance to play competitive matches.

"At school, we have nine to 10 football teams and we play each other regularly but we could not get any chance to play competitive football outside the school," said Abdullah Al Mamun, a student of BAF Shaheen School and College.

Mamun said that he was excited to play for his school as he was going to play his second school tournament after playing the first meet of the inter-BAF Shaheen School tournament.

"If I get the opportunity regularly, I will continue to play football," said Asif Shahriar, a student from the same school.

Students of Haider Ali High School informed that they always practice football and are well prepared to fight it out. Shafiuddin, a games teacher of Haider Ali High School, informed that his school always participates in the national meet likes football, cricket, kabaddi, a discipline where they finished runners-up last season.

However, every school in the tournament is not well prepared as games teacher Anisur Rahman of Jatrabari Ideal High School said that they could hardly take preparation as they were informed about the tournament in the eleventh hour.

Media celebrate Ashes triumph

Cricket

AFP, London

English commentators were overjoyed on Wednesday after their cricketers retained the Ashes in Australia for the first time in more than 20 years with a stunning victory in Melbourne.

England, who won a crushing 157-run victory over Australia in the fourth Test, had comprehensively outplayed the Aussies and were deserved winners, newspapers said.

"This represents a triumph, the vindication of months of hard work and planning," said The Times.

"England have deserved their success here," said The Telegraph.

"Aside from their stumble in Perth, they have shown more variety and consistency in their bowling than Australia and more class in general across the team."

For England, it was the first time they had won the Ashes in Australia since Mike Gatting's

team claimed the series 2-1 in 1986-1987.

Australia can still level the series if they can fight back and win next week's fifth Sydney Test, but the Ashes are gone.

English commentators rubbed their hands with glee at the poor showing by the Australians, with The Guardian branding them "rudderless and among the also-rans."

"The Australians are now in disarray and the nation is stunned at the ineptitude of their cricketers and their selectors," said the paper.

"It is impossible to lose so many brilliant cricketers simultaneously and maintain standards."

The Telegraph predicted the heavy defeat would prompt Australia to overhaul its team -- and that one casualty was likely to be Captain Ricky Ponting.

"Australian cricket had become nostalgic of late but those days are past and the rebuilding, with a new if not better captain, will surely start soon," said the paper.

Other commentators however urged the side to stay focused and to push home their advantage.

Urn stays with England

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"Our objective was to come out here and win the series, so we haven't achieved that yet," Strauss said.

"It's very reassuring to know that the Ashes are going to remain in England for the next couple of years, but it would leave a very sour taste in the mouth if we weren't able to go on and convert our position into a series win in Sydney."

England last won at the MCG in 1998 with Dean Headley taking 6-60 in the second innings as the tourists won by just 12 nail-biting runs.

The heavy defeat was only Australia's second in their last 12 MCG Tests, the previous coming two years ago against South Africa by nine wickets.

It was England's 20th win in 54 Ashes Tests at the MCG.

A small crowd, dominated by the celebrating Army and other English supporters, witnessed the final rites with the Australian fans giving up on a lost cause.

British newspapers said England comprehensively outplayed the lacklustre Aussies and were deserved winners.

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Ponting, who is expected to hold on to the captaincy for next week's Sydney Test, fitness permitting with his fractured little finger, said he hoped history would not only focus on his three Ashes defeats.

"The fact that I've lost those three Test series is disappointing for me," he said.

"Hopefully, I am not only remembered as the guy that lost those three Ashes series, there's a lot of other great things I've been part of in my career."

SCORES IN BRIEF AUSTRALIA: First innings 98 all out (Hughes 16, Ponting 10, Clarke 20, Harris 10 not out, Siddie 11; Anderson 4-44, Tremlett 4-26, Bresnan 2-25) ENGLAND: First innings 513 (Strauss 69, Cook 82, Trott 168 not out, Pietersen 51, Prior 85, Swann 22; Johnson 2-134, Hilfenhaus 2-83, Siddie 6-75)

AUSTRALIA: Second innings 258 (Watson 54, Hughes 23, Ponting 20, Smith 38, Haddin 55 not out, Siddie 40; Swann 2-59, Bresnan 4-50) Result: England won by an innings and 157 runs and lead five-match series 2-1.

Man-of-the-match: Jonathan Trott.

Strauss aims for the sky

Cricket

AFP, Melbourne

Andrew Strauss is looking ahead to making England the number one team in world cricket after achieving the Holy Grail of retaining the Ashes in Australia.

The tourists inflicted their second innings triumph over the Australians in the series with a domineering 157-run victory in the fourth Melbourne Test to take a 2-1 series lead ahead of next week's final Sydney Test.

While England bask in keeping the Ashes for a few more years after decades of Australian domination, skipper Strauss has grander plans in store for his team.

"Winning the Ashes in Australia has always been a bit of a Holy Grail for English sides," skipper Strauss said after his team mopped up a commanding win inside four days on Wednesday.

"In reality the job is a long way off being done. This is one series and as a side we've still got a lot of goals we want to achieve."

"English cricket is not just about winning the Ashes, we have to look forward to the future and try to get our team up those rankings and hopefully to world number one at some stage."

"That's the ultimate goal for us and we

have lot of small steps along the way to achieve that, including India next summer is an important step on that way."

"I get the feeling that we can still improve a lot as a side and that's quite motivating."

England are currently third on the Test rankings behind India and South Africa, with Australia fourth.

Strauss, who has grown in stature as a leader on the Ashes tour, wants to continually challenge his side to attain greater heights and sees some goals ahead, starting with next week's Sydney Test.

"There is plenty to strive for, the Sydney Test, then the World Cup and then we have India coming next summer which is going to be a big opportunity for us," he said.

"Our objective was to come out here and win the series, so we haven't achieved that yet."

"It's very reassuring to know that the Ashes are going to remain in England for the next couple of years, but it would leave a very sour taste in the mouth if we weren't able to go on and convert our position into a series win in Sydney."

Strauss, who now has won 15 of his 31 Tests since taking over as captain in July 2006, said retaining the Ashes in Australia was a team victory.

"It's immensely satisfying. There's clearly a lot of hard work that goes into

preparing for an Ashes tour and the captain's involved in that, but so is the coach and the backroom staff who have been outstanding."

"It's great for me, but we all know that a captain is nothing without the guys in the side who stand up and deliver under pressure."

"I am not going to take the credit for this, because it's not my victory, it's the team's victory."

Strauss, 33, rated hanging on to the Ashes as one of the great benchmarks of his six-and-a-half year Test career.

"You turn up in Australia knowing it's going to be hard work and the guys have dug pretty deep and richly deserve what they've got so far," he said.

"It's got to be up there somewhere. The pressure of the situation, Boxing Day, massive Test match, huge atmosphere, pressure on the line."

"So for the way the bowlers bowled on that first morning, there was a lot of pressure on them having won the toss and elected to field and they responded outstandingly well (bowling out Australia for 98)."

"Then Trott (Jonathan Trott) stood up in particular with the bat, but everyone got stuck in because we realised that this was our chance of really hammering it home and from that position onwards it was going to be hard not to win the game."

Clarke may succeed Ponting

ANI, Sydney

Michael Clarke, who has failed to handle the responsibility of batting at No.4, remains the man most likely to succeed Ricky Ponting should the captain leave following another almost certain Ashes defeat.

Clarke's lean batting form stretches back six months over three series and just as many continents.

Significantly, his slump has coincided with his promotion to fill the No. 4 slot formerly occupied by Michael Hussey, The Sydney Morning Herald reports.

Since that move, Clarke has averaged less than 22 in eight Tests and passed 50 on only two occasions. Yesterday's contribution of 13 took his series tally to an unflattering 148 from seven innings at an average of 21.

He has just two more innings to rediscover the form that saw him star against England last year. Should he fail, he will have to wait until next August against Sri Lanka, by which time he may have the added burden of leading a side in transition.

CA chief executive James Sutherland, who has twice backed Clarke this summer over his credentials to succeed Ponting, said: "Between the board and management of Cricket Australia we're always looking at ways of developing players, not just the leaders, ensuring they're making the best possible contribution to Australian cricket."

Nat'l judo starts today

SPORTS REPORTER

The thirtieth National Judo Competition starts tomorrow at the Handball Stadium in Paltan. Seventeen teams from different districts, universities and defence forces will take part in the competition. The two-day meet will be inaugurated by the president of Judo Federation Brig. Gen. Abu Bakar (retd).

Ponting wants to stay on

Cricket

AFP, Melbourne

Beleaguered Ricky Ponting said Wednesday he wanted to play on and captain his country despite his unwanted cricket epithet as the only Australian skipper to fail to win the Ashes three times.

Speculation has been fuelled during the ill-fated fourth Melbourne Test that Ponting's time might be up after a run of low scores and disciplinary issues in the twilight of a celebrated playing career.

England clinched a comprehensive 157-run victory Wednesday to retain the Ashes ahead of next week's final Test in Sydney, where they will chase a first series win Down Under for 24 years.

Ponting, 36, Test cricket's second-greatest run-getter, has had a dire series, making just 113 runs in eight innings at an average of 16, prompting calls for his removal as captain.

But Ponting said he had no plans to step down and stated his case to stay on as skipper for the Sydney Test.

"The selectors are meeting this afternoon with a view to naming the team for Sydney. It's out of my control," Ponting told a post-match press conference.

"I probably haven't got much of a case at the moment (but) I've got a lot of knowledge on the game."

"The fact that I've played 150 Tests and won 99 Tests as a player and a captain. I've captained a lot of winning teams. There is no doubt that the experiences I have in the game will hold me in good stead."

"I feel I am well equipped to bring on some young guys and we have got a few of them in the side now."

If selectors feel it is time to move Ponting aside then it is likely that his vice-captain Michael Clarke will take over, either in Sydney or beyond.

India level series

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stumps by several centimetres.

No decision review system is in place for the series because of an Indian veto and De Villiers could not challenge Rauf's ruling.

Sixteen balls later, left-arm fast bowler Zaheer Khan won a decision from umpire Steve Davis to dismiss Mark Boucher, although replays showed the ball would have missed the off stump.

Dale Steyn hit the first two boundaries of the day before he edged Khan to gully after making 10.

Ashwell Prince made 39 not out and there was a breezy 20 by Morne Morkel, before South Africa's resistance was ended when last man Lonwaba Tsotsobe was run out by a sharp return from short leg fielder Cheteshwar Pujara.

SCORES IN BRIEF

INDIA: First innings 205 (Sehwag 25, Vijay 19, Dravid 25, Tendulkar 13, Laxman 38, Pujara 19, Dhoni 35, Harbhajan 21; Steyn 6-50, Tsotsobe 2-40, Morkel 2-68)

SOUTH AFRICA: First innings 131 (Pietersen 24, Amla 33, Kallis 10, Prince 13, Boucher 16 not out; Zaheer 3-36, Harbhajan 4-10)

INDIA: Second innings 228 (Sehwag 32, Vijay 9, Tendulkar 6, Laxman 96, Pujara 10, Dhoni 21, Zaheer 27; Steyn 2-60, Morkel 3-47, Tsotsobe 3-43)

SOUTH AFRICA: Second innings 215 (Smith 37, Pietersen 26, Amla 16, Kallis 17, De Villiers 33, Prince 39 not out, Morkel 20; Zaheer 3-57, Sreesanth 3-45, Harbhajan 2-70)

Result: India won by 87 runs and level series 1-1. Man-of-the-match: VVS Laxman.

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

Crossword puzzle grid with clues for Across and Down words.

Cryptoquip puzzle grid with letters and numbers.

CRYPTOQUIP

DATWKRA LNA YMF RHWVS SR AQAZ NYXAGKM GYZ LNA QAZB DARL YKLTYVA, S HYKMF RWB NA'R YXLS - VBR LST.

Saturday's Cryptoquip: BECAUSE THAT PUB ONLY ACCEPTED ONE-DOLLAR BILLS AS PAYMENT, YOU MIGHT CALL IT A SINGLES BAR. Today's Cryptoquip Clue: A equals E