

Manchester United midfielder Park Ji-Sung has retired from international duty with South Korea after winning his 100th cap, his national coach Cho Kwang-Rae announced on Friday. Park, 29, reached the milestone in his team's penalty shoot-out defeat by Japan in the Asian Cup semifinals in Qatar this week. But he was left out of the squad for Friday's 3-2 victory over Uzbekistan in the third-place play-off match. Cho praised Park, his captain, and former Tottenham Hotspur defender Lee Young-Pyo, who had already announced his own decision to bow out from international football.



SPORT

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Clijsters breaks Sino hearts

AFP, Melbourne

australian open Belgium's Kim Clijsters came back from a set down to beat Li Na 3-6, 6-3, 6-3 in the Australian Open final Saturday, dashing Chinese hopes of a first ever Grand Slam singles title.

After a shaky first set, three-time US Open-winner Clijsters fought her way back to overhaul Li in a thrilling final in front of 15,000 fans at Rod Laver Arena.

The 27-year-old Clijsters went into the tournament as the firm favourite but was made to battle all the way by China's Li, who was hoping to complete her own fairytale and become the first Asian player to win a Grand Slam.

Li had been on the front cover of many of China's major newspapers as the world's most populous nation looked to the 28-year-old from Wuhan to create a piece of tennis history.

But despite looking the likely winner in the first set, Li faded in the third and became increasingly agitated as the match slipped away, complaining about comments and flash photography from the crowd.

"Tell the Chinese [fans], don't teach me how to play tennis," she fumed to the chair umpire, after being broken in the second set.

Clijsters had opened in fine style as she won the first eight points of the match, but once Li settled down and found her range with her dominant groundstrokes, and her forehand in particular, she steadily took control.

After convincingly winning the first set Li began to struggle to serve and Clijsters took her chance to drag her way back.

The Belgian broke Li four times in the second set and twice in the third to wrap up a tense final in 2hr 5min.

It was the 27-year-old Clijsters's fourth Grand Slam singles title and her first Australian Open, adding to her three US Open crowns.

Remarkably, three of those titles have come after she returned to the sport following her retirement to have her daughter Jada.

Li, 28, has already made history by becoming the first player from China to reach a major singles final, which made her an overnight superstar on a par with idolised basketball player Yao Ming and hurdler Liu Xiang.

China's state-run media were awash with pictures and praise for the star, promising huge audience numbers in the giant nation of 1.3 billion, where the match was screened live.

Despite a chequered history with state sports authorities, Chinese Tennis Association head Sun Jinfang hailed Li as a "pioneer" who had already secured her position as one of the country's all-time sporting greats.

Li, whose tales of her husband's snoring and her shopping sprees have delighted fans in Australia, also reached last year's Australian Open semifinal before being beaten by eventual winner Serena Williams.

Li is projected to reach a career-high world number seven in next week's rankings, while Clijsters will rise to second behind Denmark's Caroline Wozniaci.



AUSSIE KIM: Belgian tennis star Kim Clijsters is all smiles as she holds the Australian Open trophy aloft after defeating China's Li Na in the final at Melbourne yesterday.

ICC CRICKET WORLD CUP TALK

'Rana inspired us'

Mashrafe Bin Mortaza was a tearaway fast bowler in the 2003 World Cup, slowly moulding himself into the senior bowler in the 2007 event. But through it all, he did it with as much passion and fervour as is related to the Narail Express. His early breakthroughs in big matches has always been a boon for Bangladesh and it came against India too, in that famous encounter in Port-of-Spain. Here he shares his memories with The Daily Star Sport.

Daily Star Sport (DSS): How did you feel when you heard that you will play the 2003 World Cup?

Mashrafe Mortaza (MM): Well I actually played a lot of cricket before the World Cup and was quite a regular member of the team. So I knew that I would be in the squad for the tournament. But yes when I stepped into the field to play the first match, I had a totally different feeling. It was great to be a part of the team.

DSS: You played two World Cups. How would you compare between them?

MM: 2003 and 2007 were totally two different tournaments for us. Both were World Cups but our performance was totally the opposite. I would say that the 2007 World Cup was better than the one in 2003.

DSS: How would you explain the atmosphere of 2003 and 2007 World Cup?

MM: In the 2003 World Cup we had a very poor experience. We lost to Canada in the opening match and went on to lose every match in that tournament. I would say our practice was alright but not up to the mark.

Lack of confidence was another issue for the poor atmosphere we had that time.

The 2007 World Cup was much better. We reached the second round of the tournament beating India in the first



Mashrafe Mortaza

SEE PAGE 17 COL 7



Indian golfer Gaganjeet Bhullar (L) receives the American Express Bangladesh Open winner's trophy from Air Marshal S M Ziaur Rahman at the Kurmitola Golf Club yesterday.

Bhullar overcomes Siddikur challenge

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh golf sensation Siddikur Rahman played a sublime final round in the American Express Bangladesh Open at the Kurmitola Golf Club yesterday, but still fell two strokes short of Indian Gaganjeet Bhullar, who took the trophy after holding on to his slim lead.

Siddikur's (71-68-71-66) six under par score elevated him from the sixth position that he occupied at the end of Round Three, to overall second with a cumulative score of twelve under par. The defending champion provided Bhullar with a stiff challenge on the final day as he made a charge with a brilliant bogey-free round studded with six birdies. He even came agonisingly close to a hole-in-one on the sixth where his shot hit the flag and landed four feet from the pin.

"I played very aggressive golf today but didn't putt well. I missed a number of birdie putts within 10 feet. Nonetheless, it was a good final round effort and gives me a lot of confidence going ahead into the Asian Tour season," said Siddikur.

It was however a different story for eventual winner Bhullar (68-71-64-71), who played a steady round of one under par to keep a

grasp on his lead, ending with a cumulative score of 14 under par. The foundation for the win was laid in the third round when he played a brilliant round of eight under par, giving him an overnight lead of three strokes. Yesterday, he made his first birdie of the day on the fifth courtesy of a good chip-putt. He converted another chip-putt for birdie on the 14th. Gaganjeet dropped a bogey on the 15th but then held on to his two-stroke lead with pars on the last three holes, making the 22-year-old the first Indian to win the Bangladesh Open. It was also his 10th professional title and seventh on the Aircel PGTI.

"I was confident of coming through today. However, I knew I had to play a steady round and let the others, especially Siddikur, do all the chasing. I stuck to my strategy of going for pars, particularly on the back nine, as the pins were quite tricky. I just aimed to make the fairways and greens and then follow that up with two-putts," said an elated Bhullar.

Siddikur was happy with his final round effort but was a bit disappointed with his putting. India's Shamim Khan finished third with an even par score in the final round.

FIFA windfall for BFF

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh Football federation will receive 3 lakh US dollars as profits for the football's regional governing body. FIFA will distribute the additional net profit for the 2007-2010 period between all of its member nations. Earlier, FIFA gave away 2.5 lakh dollars to each federation last year. The confederations will each receive 25 lakh. The decision was taken in the latest FIFA congress held in Samoa.

The total amount of net profit for the period was 340 crore dollars, a lion's share of which was generated from hosting the 2010 World Cup in South Africa.

SEE PAGE 17 COL 1

Club Cup cricket

SPORTS REPORTER

Saidpur Cricket Club moved into the second round of the inter-district Club Cup cricket tournament yesterday.

The Nilphamari team beat home side Eidgah Sporting Club of Dinajpur by four wickets to make the progress.

Away at the MA Aziz Stadium in Chittagong, Young Society Club of Comilla beat Feni's Manchester United Club by 54 runs.

U-14 tennis

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh's Delowar Hossain finished third while Wy Mong Marma ended sixth in Group 2 of the ITF Under-14 Asian Championship at the Tainbo Tennis centre in Yangon, Myanmar yesterday. Delowar Hossain Shajal, the other participant in the boys' group ended 23rd, said a press release from Bangladesh Tennis Federation yesterday.

In the girls' group, Jhilik Chakma, Ishita Afroze and Ayesha Sultana finished 16th, 17th and 23rd respectively.

Ugliness follows draw

SPORTS REPORTER

An after-match bust-up between two players of opposing teams that eventually embroiled the whole teams and officials added a tinge of colour, surely a dark one, to a mundane Bangladesh League encounter at the Bishreshtha Mostafa Kamal Stadium yesterday.

It all started as soon as the final whistle was blown to a 1-1 deadlock between Arambagh Krira Sangha and Sheikh Russel Krira Chakra. The players were on for a parade of sporting handshakes when Chahrout Youssef, the Moroccan forward of Sheikh Russel spitted on Mostapha Kaba, a Guinean defender of Arambagh. Chahrout had earlier scored the equaliser which seemingly did not go down well with the Arambagh players as they kept sledging on him since. But the after-match reaction was pretty much uncalled for and the Guinean reacted with a

slap on his face that got the host of people engaged. Things got worse when two Arambagh players hit Russel coach Mahmudul Haque Liton on the face as he tried to separate them.

Even by the low disciplinary standards of the tournament, this was something very rare that a coach was assaulted, whether intentionally or not is another matter. The inconsolable coach said: "I was there to appease them when Mostapha and Deen Mohammed hit me, and it was not accidental. The [football] federation should take measures against this incident."

Deen, the Arambagh captain, claimed he himself was there to separate the brawling players and it was by accident that the coach got hit, a claim supported by his own coach.

The action before the final whistle was much less riveting than the low level of the one that followed.

The team from

Dhanmondi were looking to close the gap between them and the top two while the Motijheel outfit looked at ensuring that they didn't get in the relegation zone.

The first goal came in the 43rd minute, much against the run of play, when Bangoura Ismael headed in a Sarif Khan cross to give Arambagh the lead. It was the Guinean striker's second goal of the league, and only the third for Arambagh.

But soon after the restart the lead was cancelled as Russel upped the ante. Chahrout, the Moroccan striker who had earlier failed to get to the end of a few scoring opportunities, was on hand in front of the post to head in a rebound from the Arambagh keeper. The initial shot from Mohammad Yusuf came off the post before it fell to Youssef. His initial header was slapped away by the keeper but the Moroccan had a second bite and this time the ball ended up on the back of the net to make it 1-1 all.

SEE PAGE 17 COL 8



Sheikh Russel's Moroccan striker Chahrout Youssef, evading a hard tackle from an Arambagh player here, could not replicate that during the post-match brawl at the Bishreshtha Mostafa Kamal Stadium yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR