

Goals galore

SPORTS REPORTER

National striker Sabina Khutam continued her prolific scoring form in the National Women's Football Championship, striking 13 goals to power Sathkira to a massive 19-0 win over Noagaon at Shamsul Huda Stadium in Jessor on yesterday.

Sabina, who had earlier struck 10 goals in their 12-0 win over Sirajganj, scored seven goals in the first half to help her district take an effortless 10-0 lead in the first half.

Apart from Sabina, Suriya netted twice while Sharmin, Tumpa, Hasiba and Taslima scored one goal each for Sathkira in the one-way traffic.

Kulna also celebrated their campaign with a goal feast riding on two hattricks from Jannatul Ferdous and Khadija Khatun as Kulna handed a comprehensive 11-0 defeat to Jamalpur at the Tangail Stadium. Both Jannatul and Khadija struck five goals each while Fatema netted the other.

At Thakurgaon Stadium, Rangpur thrashed Joypurhat 7-0 while Gaibandha defeated Bogra 4-0 at the Dinajpur Stadium.

GP Open squash underway

SPORTS REPORTER

The Grameenphone Open Squash got underway at the Dhaka Club squash court yesterday.

On the opening day, Swapnil Parvez of Bashundhara beat Raju of Navy Club 6-11, 11-3, 2-11, 11-9, 11-6 in the premier division. A total of 76 players from 10 clubs are taking part in 5 categories -- premier division, A-division, B-division, Under-18 and Senior division (above 45).

Commerce Minister Muhammad Faruk Khan inaugurated the tournament while director of Grameenphone Ishtiaque Hossain, Dhaka Club president Sadat Hossain and Squash Federation president Mushfiqur Rahman Mohan were among others present.

SPOT-FIXING
British trial of Pak trio from today

AFP, London

The trial of three Pakistan cricketers and their agent on charges of corruption relating to 'spot-fixing' in England last year is due to get underway here on Friday.

Former captain Salman Butt and fast bowlers Mohammad Asif and Mohammad Aamer have, along with agent Mazher Majeed, been charged with conspiracy to cheat and conspiracy to obtain and accept corrupt payments.

The quartet were charged after police inquiries following accusations in the News of the World newspaper that no-balls were deliberately bowled in the fourth Test match at London's Lord's Cricket Ground last August.

Friday's hearing at Southwark Crown Court, south London, is expected to be procedural affair where the date for the trial proper will be set. Of the three players, only Asif has stated his intention to attend Friday's proceedings.

The four accused appeared at a hearing at London's City of Westminster Magistrates' Court, on March 17, which set the date for Friday's court case, and were granted unconditional bail.

The British-based Majeed was told to surrender his passport.

At the March hearing, prosecutor Sally Walsh said all four men were accused of having "conspired together and with others unknown for 150,000 pounds (240,000 dollars) as inducement or reward to bowl three no-balls at the fourth Test".



Australia spin king Shane Warne poses with his beau, British actress Elizabeth Hurley for the launch of apparel brand "Spinners by Shane Warne" in Mumbai yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

'Fined for telling truth'

AFP, New Delhi

DLFA
INDIAN PREMIER LEAGUE

Australia's retiring spin legend Shane Warne on Thursday slammed the hefty fine handed to him during the Indian Premier League (IPL) for a public spat with an official, saying he was paying the price for "telling the truth".

Warne, captain of Rajasthan Royals in the IPL, was on Wednesday fined 50,000 dollars for his part in a row with Sanjay Dixit, secretary of Rajasthan Cricket Association, over the choice of wicket for a home game.

"Not saddened about what happened at all," Warne told CNN-IBN news channel. "I got fined for telling the truth. The incident was silly, petty and a bit immature. I won't let this spoil my IPL and the experience I've had."

The 41-year-old leg-spinner rowed with Dixit in front of the television cameras earlier this month over the selection of a new wicket for Rajasthan's home games which offered less turn for the spinners.

He is set to play his last game as a professional cricketer on Friday when Rajasthan take on Mumbai Indians in their final outing

of this year's Twenty20 competition.

Rajasthan, with seven defeats from 13 outings, are already out of contention for a place in the play-offs.

Warne said he had no regrets about his bust-up with Dixit.

"No regrets at all because you cannot change the past. I should have gifted Sanjay Dixit a pair of Spinners underwear," he joked, referring to the brand of men's underwear he endorses.

The Aussie star also said the IPL was not the same without Lalit Modi, the sacked former boss of the IPL who is under investigation for corruption.

Dixit had earlier mocked the bowler in a column and also took aim at the controversial blond-haired star over his romance with British model Elizabeth Hurley.

"He (Warne) caused quite a sensation with his long lip-lock in full public view at the time of presentation ceremony of a game which he won," wrote the official.

"I had to quieten things down to make sure that the matter did not reach the courts. Warne was admonished, I am given to understand, but it did not deter him much."

England's Pak tour to be in Lanka?

Cricket

REUTERS, Karachi

Pakistan is examining the possibility of hosting its home cricket series against England in Sri Lanka early next year because of security concerns.

A senior Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) official told Reuters on Thursday that they were looking at Sri Lanka, or as a back-up, the United Arab Emirates as potential venues.

"While finalising the venues it will boil down to the cost factor," said chief operating officer Subhan Ahmad. "We have got an offer from Sri Lanka to host the series and are looking at it."

England also wants to play the scheduled series at a neutral venue because of the worrying security situation in Pakistan.

No foreign team has visited Pakistan since 2009 when in March of that year militants attacked the Sri Lankan team in Lahore killing six Pakistani policemen and a van driver.

Five visiting players in the team bus were also wounded.

Ahmad said that the PCB had to see where

it could save on costs.

"We are already struggling because of not being able to host any international matches at home," he said.

"But we need to carry on our obligations even at neutral venues. But cost is a big deciding factor for us."

Pakistan has in the last two years played its one-day and Test series against Australia, New Zealand and South Africa in Dubai and Abu Dhabi.

Last year England hosted Pakistan's home Tests against Australia.

Ahmad said the series against England was an important one and could yield significant revenues from sponsorship and other rights for Pakistan.

"Sri Lanka is keen but we have to see where we can get the best sponsors in Sri Lanka or the UAE," he added.

Pakistan is also due to play a home series against Sri Lanka late this year but the venue is yet to be finalised.

Sri Lanka has said they are ready to play at home or any neutral venue.

After playing Sri Lanka in October-November, Pakistan goes to Bangladesh before hosting England.

Dhaka: Second best

FROM PAGE 16

more attention, his top-order batting has been a revelation.

Sunny too has had a fine campaign. The left-arm spinner who used his batting talent to the fullest in the last two seasons hails from the city's Hazaribagh neighborhood and is a local hero of sorts. It was hardly a surprise that he was drafted into Bangladesh A's one-day side in South Africa; in fact, it felt as if it was an overdue call-up.

Rubel too managed 34 wickets after not being originally part of the team when the competition began last September. There was some reservations given his 'former rebel' status but the lanky left-arm spinner was determined to do well and along with Sunny, is a firm contender for a national team spot in the near future.

This is what the Dhaka team has been about in the last three seasons of Rajshahi dominance. It has been a good platform for players willing to break into the national team but of late, that route has become slightly barren.

The NCL teams are also a clear reflection of cricket standards in the different regions in the country and while Dhaka have the best resources (in terms of players and infrastructure), they have quite a distance to cover to become the best first-class team.

Misbah

FROM PAGE 16

family visit and he will join the team in Ireland.

The rest of the members were in the West Indies, where they play the second and final Test at St. Kitts starting Friday.

SQUAD

Misbahul Haq (captain), Younis Khan, Taufiq Umar, Mohammad Hafeez, Asad Shafiq, Azhar Ali, Shahid Afridi, Mohamad Salman, Saeed Ajmal, Abdur Rehman, Umar Akmal, Umar Gul, Wahab Riaz, Tanvir Ahmed, Junaid Khan and Hammad Azam.

2nd WI-Pak Test from today

Cricket

AFP, Basstere

Pakistan will look to salvage the remainder of a tour that started with great promise when they face West Indies in the second and final Test starting on Friday at Warner Park.

Pakistan trailed by 1-0 in the two-Test series following a stunning, 40-run victory for West Indies last Sunday at the Guyana National Stadium. The result meant that the visitors' dreams of a maiden Test series victory on Caribbean soil were crushed again.

They will now have to focus solely on leaving the Caribbean with their heads held high with a series-leveelling victory.

"We will be ready, and we will be motivated for the final Test," said Pakistan captain Misbahul Haq.

"There were a lot of positive things for us from the [first] match, and we showed a lot of fighting spirit."

After restricting West Indies to 226 in the first innings, the Pakistani batting then flopped as they were conceded a first innings lead of 66. Off-spinner Saeed Ajmal led the fightback with a career-best six wickets in the West Indies second innings that gave him 11 scalps in the match, and had the home team on the ropes.

But Pakistan allowed West Indies to wriggle free from the despair of 104 for

nine, as the last wicket pair of Shivnarine Chanderpaul and Devendra Bishoo beefed-up their side's total with an eventual, match-winning partnership of 48.

Some may question the role the pitch played in the defeat, but Misbah was also willing to admit that the West Indies clearly dealt with the conditions better in Guyana.

"After we gave up a first innings lead, the bowlers bowled really well, and fought very hard hard to bring us back into the game," said Misbah.

"When we lost three wickets very early in the second innings, it was really difficult for us because of the way West Indies were bowling, but we fought hard."

"But we must give credit to West Indies. They bowled very well in the game, and most of our guys got out to good balls."

West Indies coach Ottis Gibson has signalled his side's intention of trying to earn a rare series victory, let alone a series sweep. He said his side had talked long and hard about winning the series and West Indies captain Darren Sammy, whose five wickets in the visitors second innings ushered his side to victory in Guyana, agreed with Gibson.

"We have only won one match," said Sammy. "We will take a lot of confidence from this result, but we still have

to continue working hard, and look to improve our performance in the second Test."

"We did not bat very well [in the first Test], so we need to put decent totals on the board because we know the way our bowlers have been bowling over the last year, we believe we are capable of getting 20 wickets. We just need to keep improving in all disciplines, and we can come out victorious in the second Test."

Only two Tests have been played at Warner Park, since it was redeveloped ahead of the 2007 World Cup. They have both ended in high-scoring draws for which Pakistan have little desire, and West Indies would require to formalise a series victory.

SQUADS

WEST INDIES (from): Darren Sammy (captain), Brendon Nash (vice captain), Devendra Bishoo, Carlton Baugh Jr, Darren Bravo, Kraigg Brathwaite, Shivnarine Chanderpaul, Fidel Edwards, Ravi Rampaul, Kemar Roach, Marlon Samuels, Ramnaresh Sarwan, Lendl Simmons, Devon Smith.

PAKISTAN (from): Misbahul Haq (captain), Abdur Rehman, Asad Shafiq, Azhar Ali, Hammad Azam, Junaid Khan, Mohamad Salman, Saeed Ajmal, Tanvir Ahmed, Taufiq Umar, Umar Akmal, Umar Gul, Wahab Riaz.

TT in Bangladesh

FROM PAGE 16

and Syed Mowdud Ali as the general secretary.

The federation staged its first-ever national championships in December 1974. It may be mentioned here that the championship at that time involved clubs instead of teams from districts and services. The event was held at the gymnasium of the National Sports Council in Purana Paltan, where a huge crowd thronged every day. The final a battle between Old Town and New Town -- was a colossal crowd-puller.

Abahani Krira Chakra, who represented new Dhaka, was pitted against Farashganj Sporting Club of old Dhaka. Backed by their massive band of vocal and delirious supporters, Farashganj took the team event title defeating Abahani by 5-3 sets.

Abahani, however, made amends by sweeping the remaining gold medals on offer in the men's and women's categories. For records, Munshi Noor Ahmed of Abahani became the first official men's TT champion of Bangladesh by beating his teammate Mahbub Reza Chowdhury in straight sets. Helen won the women's singles crown by defeating her younger sister 9-year-old Zobera Rahman Linu.

Linu, who later emerged as the most dominant table tennis player of the country, also enjoyed her share of success at such a tender age when she won the women's doubles title with her elder sister Helen. It was the beginning of a long chapter for Linu, who ultimately went on to set a Guinness World Record by winning the highest number of national women's singles titles (16) up to 2001.

Bangladesh's first exposure to the international table tennis arena was when a team of observers attended the 33rd World TT Championship held in Kolkata in 1975. Then it was in 1976 when a 9-member team from Bangladesh participated in the 3rd Asian

Table Tennis Championship held in North Korea. There were high hopes from the team's maiden outing abroad, but the performance of Bangladeshi players was not up to the mark and the men's team could win in only one match (against Lebanon) out of seven. The same trend of mostly mediocre performances has continued to bedevil the national table tennis side till today. A common feature in most of these outings has been a lack of preparation or exhaustive coaching and a dearth of dedication and commitment among players.

The club-based format of national table tennis championships continued up to 1977. But this format was revised from the fourth national TT Championship onwards (for the first time held outside Dhaka, at Rangpur, in 1978), when area or institution based sports associations replaced sports clubs as competitors in the teams' event.

I think it was a big blow for some leading Dhaka-based clubs who were dominating the table tennis scene then. Many of them lost interest in the game and as a consequence a steady supply of table tennis players and supporters from various locations of Dhaka and elsewhere went through a period of decline. The associations which replaced the clubs became active only before or during national championships, and remained mostly idle throughout the year. Many observers feel that this format did not help the growth of table tennis in the country and a return to the club-based format should once again be given serious consideration by table tennis federation in order to facilitate grassroots development of the game.

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CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

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