

Star SPORT

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Lady Gaga coming to first Delhi GP

American pop sensation Lady Gaga has been signed up to play at India's inaugural Formula One race next month, which will be held at a newly-built circuit outside the capital New Delhi. The colourful diva will perform at a concert after the Indian Grand Prix on October 30, organisers said in a press release on Saturday. US heavy metal outfit Metallica are also slated to play at an "F1 Rocks" gig in the satellite town of Gurgaon on October 28 as a lead-up to the race.

-- AFP



NCL looks bleak

Cricket

SPORTS REPORTER

The country's lone first-class cricket tournament, the National Cricket League (NCL), has already run into trouble. It is now unlikely for the competition to begin on the originally scheduled date of October 10 as the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) is not finding enough players to fill up the eight teams.

The erstwhile six-team NCL has been expanded to eight teams with the addition of Rangpur and Dhaka Metropolis. Now with the Tigers playing against West Indies next month, Bangladesh A scheduled to fly off to the West Indies at the end of October and the GP-BCB National Cricket Academy also set to tour India, there is a dearth of cricketers good enough to play first-class cricket.

According to BCB's tournament committee secretary Hafizur Rahman Joarder, just one division has enough players while the rest would find it difficult to field even a playing eleven.

"Only Rajshahi can field a good team but not teams like Khulna. They have players in the national setup and some are also injured," he said last night after their meeting was cancelled due to tournament committee chairman Gazi Ashraf Hossain's illness.

Lack of competitiveness is the main deterrent for the tournament committee and they are not ready to host an NCL without some of these top players. They fear that

matches could be over in two days, drawing fire from all concerned.

Some however have doubted whether it is so difficult to find 120-150 cricketers good enough for first-class cricket. Since the inception of the competition, the organisers have always tried to make the incumbent top players play first-class cricket but in the last few seasons, hardly any of the national players have taken part in the competition.

Though it creates space for lesser known talents to come up through the ranks, the poor infrastructural facilities across the country stop such players from making a mark. Only Dhaka, Rajshahi and part of the northern belt have active cricket academies with suggestions as the big beneficiary. But divisions like Sylhet, Khulna, Barisal and Chittagong have very little to work with.

The addition of Dhaka Metropolis as the eighth team is also curious as there are very few quality cricketers who are residents of the capital city. Though Dhaka is the centre of cricketing activities, the leagues (First Division and Premier) teams hardly have a player who lives in Dhaka in their line-ups.

A more reformed approach with

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Nur Hossain Munna (L) and Talha Jubair (R) chase Tigers batsman Shahriar Nafees (C) during training at the Academy ground yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

Messi-merising Barca

Ronaldo also hits treble

REUTERS, Madrid



Barcelona went second in La Liga after Lionel Messi scored a brilliant hat-trick in a 5-0 win over Atletico Madrid on Saturday while Cristiano Ronaldo recorded another treble in 10-man Real Madrid's 6-2 drubbing of Rayo Vallecano.

The two Spanish heavyweights dropped points in their previous games but returned to winning ways with dominant home performances engineered by their two outstanding players.

Valencia suffered their first defeat of the season when they were beaten 1-0 at nine-man Sevilla and Athletic Bilbao's new coach Marcelo Bielsa is still without a win after the Basque club surrendered the lead in a 1-1 draw at home to Villarreal.

Champions Barca, bidding for a fourth straight title, have 11 points

from five games, level with third-placed Sevilla and one ahead of Real Madrid and Valencia.

Promoted Real Betis, the surprise early leaders, have 12 points from four games and visit Getafe on Monday.

RESULTS

Real Mallorca 2 (Victor 20, Castro 50) Real Sociedad 1 (Agirretxe 15)
Athletic Bilbao 1 (Gabilondo 43) Villarreal 1 (Nilmar 53)
Sevilla 1 (Kanoute 18) Valencia 0
Real Madrid 6 (Cristiano Ronaldo 38, 50-pen, 84-pen, Higuain 45+1, Varane 66, Benzema 73) Rayo Vallecano 2 (Cuesta 1, 55)
Barcelona 5 (Villa 9, Miranda 15-og, Messi

Atletico had the first clear chance at a rainy Nou Camp when Jose Antonio Reyes squared for Tiago and the Portuguese midfielder curled a shot from the edge of the penalty area that struck

the crossbar.

That was as good as it got for Gregorio Manzano's side as Barca, who drew 2-2 at Valencia on Wednesday, were ahead in the ninth minute.

A superb pass from playmaker Xavi sent David Villa clear and he turned inside his marker before rifling a low shot past keeper Thibaut Courtois.

Barca doubled their lead six minutes later when World Player of the Year Messi and Pedro combined and the ball deflected in for an own goal off defender Joao Miranda.

Messi made it 3-0 in the 26th minute when he flummoxed the Atletico defence with an outrageous piece of skill before curling a precise shot inside the post.

His second came after a trademark run across the defence and shot back across the keeper and he completed the hat-trick in added time when he ran on to a Villa chip and shot through the legs of Courtois from a tight angle.

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Barcelona sensation Lionel Messi gives the run around to Atletico Madrid defenders during their La Liga match at the Nou Camp on Saturday.

PHOTO: AFP

Siddikur finishes joint 24th

SPORTS REPORTER

Siddikur Rahman failed to produce anything special on the last day of the Asia Pacific Panasonic Open in Japan as he finished in joint 24th position after a round of one-over-par (73) in the last round at the Biwako Country Club in Shiga, Japan yesterday.

Siddikur's aggregate score was one-over-par (285) which saw him tied in 24th position with five other players, while the title was taken by Japan's Tetsuji Hiratsuka with an 8-under-par (276).

Hiratsuka finished two shots clear of Korea's S.K Ho and Kim Do-hoon who signed for matching 279s at the 1.7 million dollar event jointly sanctioned by the Asian Tour and Japan Golf Tour.

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Tigers gear up for longer version

Practice 4-dayer from today

Cricket

SPORTS REPORTER

The Tigers will play their only longer version game ahead of the series against West Indies from today.

The four-day match between BCB Red and BCB Green at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur will start at 9:30am.

Mushfiqur Rahim will lead a virtually full strength side with Tamim Iqbal, Imrul Kayes, Mahmudullah Riyad, Shafiu Islam and Rubel Hossain. They will take on the Shahriar Nafees-led side which includes Test aspirants Junaed Siddiqui, Alok Kapali, Naeem Islam and Shahadat Hossain.

Curiously, the selectors decided to name a second-string bowling attack to take on openers Tamim and Imrul as both Shafiu and Rubel are in the same side. The two left-handers will therefore take on a pace attack

comprising of Shahadat, Robiul Islam and Syed Rasel.

But Nur Hossain and Kapali, the two leg-spinners, will bowl to most of the Tigers' batsmen as already Mohammad Ashraful has cited West Indies's leggie Devender Bishoo as the major threat.

The Tigers still don't have a settled middle-order and competition for the No 3 place will be between Nafees and Junaed, with the former already ahead with a half-century in the only Test this year. Ashraful would also believe he has an assured spot, though the match will also serve coach Stuart Law as an experimental ground to test out new strategies and a revamped line-up.

Nasir Hossain, who is listed in the Red team, will also look to win a Test place after impressing with a half-century on his ODI debut back in August against Zimbabwe.

"Like everyone else, I'm also hopeful. This

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NSC's TALENT HUNT

Second phase to start soon

SPORTS REPORTER

Some 600 athletes from 18 disciplines are waiting for the intensive training after being picked from the talent hunt programme conducted by the National Sports Council, the sports regulatory body in Bangladesh.

It is a rare initiative from the NSC, which is more known for its renovation and construction activities round the year rather than creating platform for the development of athletes. Nevertheless the lack of foresight regarding the selection of disciplines has put this novel imitative at a stake.

The NSC initially chose 20 disciplines without considering their popularity or potential at the international level. It was learnt that they did it to satisfy the organisers, even though those organisers can not hold their own tournaments regularly.

The disciplines which were pricked are: football, volleyball, boxing, table tennis, athletics, handball, weightlifting, judo, kabaddi, hockey, swimming, tennis, basketball, chess, taekwondo, wushu, karate, cycling and gymnastics.

Cricket, which is the most popular sport in the country at the moment, initially made

the list, but has later been dropped.

Training at the district level started on February 3 and concluded in the latter part of October. Training of the cyclists is yet to get started though as there is a lack of cycles right now. Cyclists' training is expected to get underway next month.

The initiative has been seen a positive venture as some 2,292 athletes from 18 disciplines were provided basic training for 21 days at 130 venues of 46 districts at the cost of Tk 1.41 crore. A total of 231 coaches from NSC and federations picked more than 600 athletes for further training.

"True, we had some loopholes at the talent hunt programme due to extensive programme in 46 districts as well as respective federations' engagement in international meets but there was no shortage of eagerness from us.

"In future, we will organise this talent hunt programme reducing the number of disciplined to within eight to 10 and restricting to those disciplines that have potential to do well at international circuit as well as having popularity inside the country," said NSC director (sports) Haiul Quaium yesterday.

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Code of conduct lesson for Tigers

SPORTS REPORTER

National cricketers, within and outside the BCB contracted list, have undertaken a comprehensive session yesterday on their code of conduct.

The players were told what is expected of them as far as on-field behaviour is concerned as well as during commercial and media obligations.

In addition to being reminded of their contractual obligations with the sponsors while in the media side of affairs, the players' basic conduct was also discussed.

"We made them aware of what they can and cannot say. Apart from this, we also told them about exclusive interviews which we generally don't encourage," said BCB media manager Rabeed Imam, who was present during the briefing.

General manager

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