

Star SPORT

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Back to basics

Australia batsman Ricky Ponting has revealed that he had sought help from his first Sheffield Shield coach Greg Shipperd in an effort to come out of his current slump in form ahead of the four-Test series against India.

"I got Shipperd to come down and feed me some balls on the machine yesterday (Friday), so that he could have a bit of a look at what I was doing," Ponting said. "It wasn't major stuff, but really balance stuff and stuff that I guess batsmen work on day in and day out. And that was the major point for me."

-INTERNET



Victoria, Agrani in final round

SPORTS REPORTER



Victoria Sporting Club and Agrani Bank SC moved into the final round of the Grameenphone Federation Cup after beating their respective rivals by an identical 1-0 margin in the qualification round at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

Victoria defeated Bangladesh Air Force 1-0, thanks to a first half strike from Toklis Ahmed while ten-man Agrani Bank beat Uttar Baridhara Club also by 1-0, riding on a first-half strike from Nur Hossain.

The defeat for Uttar Baridhara Club meant three out of the seven clubs of the upcoming Bangladesh Premiership League were eliminated from the group stage while three qualified for the finals. The fate of another BPL outfit, Wari Club, depends on Tuesday's match against BKSP.

Both matches started with a one-minute silence in memory of Awami League leader Abdur Razzak, one of veteran organizers of Bangladesh's Liberation War in 1971, who passed away in London on Friday.

In the first game, Toklis gave the Motijheel-based the solitary goal and thus an opportunity to play three more games in the 16-team finals before they take part in the inaugural second-tier

professional football league.

Victoria SC, guided by Jahan E Alam Nury who came into coaching after hanging up his boots two years ago, held the upper-hand throughout the game and dominated the show with their crisp passing and ball control.

Victoria came close to taking the lead in the 25th minute, but Abdul Hannan missed a sitter as he sent a Siraj cross over the cross-piece. However, Hannan later made amends to set up Taklis for the decisive goal.

Hannan sent a through ball towards the danger zone for Taklis, a striker of U-19 national team, who shrugged off his marker Abdul Kader and dodged past goalkeeper Al Amin to tap the ball home five minutes before the breather.

In the second match, Agrani Bank, a former Premier League side, went ahead in the 27th minute when Nur Hossain volleyed a Suján Mahmud lob to find the back of Uttar Baridhara's net.

Uttar Baridhara failed to capitalize on their chances and could not even take advantage of their numerical superiority after Agrani Bank striker Hanif Prothan was sent off in the 75th minute for a second book-worthy offence.

Both sides fought equally in the second half and created a good number of scoring chances but their efforts went in vain due to poor finishing.



PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

Victoria Sporting Club striker Toklis Ahmed dodges a Bangladesh Air Force defender on his way to scoring a goal during their Grameenphone Federation Cup match at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

IFIC 4TH NATIONAL AIRGUN CHAMPIONSHIP

Ratna shines, Asif falters

SPORTS REPORTER

Sharmin Akhter Ratna shone in the 10m Air Rifles event of the IFIC 4th National Airgun Championship while Asif Hossain Khan disappointed in his favourite event at the National Shooting Complex in Gulshan yesterday.

Ratna, a gold medallist in the SA Games and Commonwealth Shooting Championship, produced a brilliant performance to win the 10m Air Rifles event with a score of 498.6 out of 509 but Asif, also a gold medalist in the 2002 Commonwealth Games as well as the 2004 SA Games, frustrated once again as he finished fourth with a miserable score of 685.1 out of 709.

Ratna, who is set to take part in the Asian Shooting Championship in a bid to earn a 2012 Olympics place, had a good start in the qualification after scoring 396 out of 400, which helped her stay on top as Suraiya and Tripti shot 394 and 393 respectively.

Tripti, who will also take part in the Asian Shooting Championship along with Ratna,

Sadia Sultana and Sharmin Akter, proved her mettle in the shoot-off to score 104 out of 109, 1.6 points more than Ratna. However, the former BKSP student had to be content with a silver medal as she notched up a total of 497 points, 1.6 less than Ratna.

Despite having scored one point more than Tripti in the qualification, Suraiya failed to keep up the momentum in the play-off after scoring 102.5 and thus finished third with a total score of 496.5.

In the men's 10m Air Rifles event, Jessimuzzaman, a student of BKSP, won the gold with a score of 691.3 (589 qualification and 102.3 shoot-off), Abdullah Hel Baki won silver with a score of 689.8 (586 qualification and 103.8 shoot-off) while Anjan Kumar Singha bagged bronze scoring 687.9 (588 qualification and 99.9 shoot-off).

Jessimuzzaman's feat helped BKSP Shooting Club emerge champions with three gold, two silver and four bronze medals while Army Shooting Association finished behind second with two gold and three silver.

WALTON NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP

Zia's twelfth



Chess

SPORTS REPORTER

Grand Master Ziaur Rahman claimed his twelfth national title defeating Golam Mostofa in the final round of the 37th Walton National Chess Championship at the BOA Media Hall yesterday.

This was a record twelfth title for Zia and his third in four years, after he missed the last championship due to a coaching stint abroad. His closest competitor in terms of championships won being Grand Master Reefat Bin Sattar who has won the title six times while country's first Grand Master Niaz Murshed has won the title four times.

Zia remained unbeaten throughout the championship this year and finished with 11.5 points beating Niaz Murshed, who also stayed unbeaten in the tournament, by a point. Niaz defeated Mohammad Javed in the final round yesterday to be the runner-up.

The third and fourth place will be decided today through a play-off between Minhazuddin Ahmed and Abu Sufian who are tied on 10 points. Minhaz got walk-over against Mahtabuddin Ahmed while Abu Sufian defeated Monir Hossain in the last round.

Debraj Chatterjee drew with Sohel Chowdhury to finish fifth with 7.5 points. Monir, Mehedi, Mahtab, Sohel, Mahfuz, Shafik, Javed and Mostafa finished from sixth to 13th positions.

Grand Master Reefat Bin Sattar had earlier withdrawn midway through the competition due to personal reasons.



Grand Master Ziaur Rahman makes a move during his final round match against Golam Mostofa in the Walton 37th National Chess Championship at the BOA Media Hall yesterday. Zia won the match and was crowned champion.

PHOTO: STAR

3 ON 3 BASKETBALL

Navy-A & Bijoy 1971 champions

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh Navy-A and Bijoy 1971 emerged champions in boys and girls group respectively in the Citycell 3 on 3 Basketball Championship at the Dhanmondi Basketball Gymnasium yesterday.

Navy beat Europa Youth by 20-6 points in the boys' final, after leading the first half 10-1. In the girls' final, Bijoy-1971 defeated IUB by 11-8 points in a strongly contested affair. The winners led the first half by 5-4 points.

Meanwhile, Citycell Victory Day Basketball Championship will start today in the same venue. Four teams -- Bangladesh Army, Bangladesh Navy, Bangladesh Police and Bakshibazar -- will participate in the event. Bangladesh Army will take on Bakshibazar in the opening match.

National kabaddi

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh Navy chalked up two wins on the opening day of the services round of Meizan National Kabaddi Championship at the Kabaddi Stadium yesterday. Navy first beat Bangladesh Fire Service and Civil Defence by 36-15 points before defeating Bangladesh Air Force by 38-12 points. Bangladesh Air Force meanwhile drew the other match against Bangladesh Prison 24-24. The fourth match between Bangladesh Prison and Bangladesh Fire Service and Civil Defence was on when this report was filed.

The final round matches of the services zone will be held today at the same venue. Bangladesh Kabaddi Federation's vice-president and tournament committee chairman AKM Mukitir Rahman will distribute prizes among the finalists.



PHOTO: STAR

Action from the National Kabaddi Championship match between Bangladesh Navy and Bangladesh Air Force at the Kabaddi Stadium yesterday.

Form will make the difference: Haddin



Cricket

REUTERS, Melbourne

Australia's batting boot camp focussed more on mental work rather than technical shortcomings with wicketkeeper Brad Haddin predicting the form of the team's batting line-up will make-up for their inexperience in the series against India.

Australia's recent batting woes, which included 47 all out against South Africa in Cape Town and a dismal buckling to lose the Hobart Test against New Zealand, prompted the bosses to convene a boot camp before the first Test against India on Monday.

The three-day camp was held this week at the Melbourne Cricket Ground under the supervision of coach Mickey Arthur and Haddin said the theme was about clearing the batsmen's mind.

"Freeing your head, having no other thoughts in your head but just playing cricket," Haddin told reporters on Sunday. "You'll see over the next five days whether it

has all paid off.

"I think we're in a very good space. We've had a week to prepare. We couldn't be more prepared and more looking forward to the game."

Australia's top three batsmen, debutant Ed Cowan, David Warner (two Tests) and Shaun Marsh (three Tests), have little experience but Haddin does not see it as an issue.

All three left-handed batsmen have scored runs of late and according to Haddin that will put them in good stead when the first of the four Tests start on Monday.

"I think it's important that we all stand up," the 34-year old said. "After our series against New Zealand we are very much looking forward to this."

"You talk about our inexperienced top three, I think we've got a very in-form top three, which is good, and if we're going to do any good in this series it's going to be from one to seven with the bat."

"We've all got to perform. We've got to make sure we've got our game heads on and ready to go."