

BGB retain kabaddi title

SPORTS REPORTER

Border Guard Bangladesh ((BGB) reaffirmed their Kabaddi supremacy as they won the national kabaddi title for the 22nd time yesterday.

BGB, formerly known as Bangladesh Rifles, beat Bangladesh Police by 28-16 points with a creditable 'lona' in the final of the Meizan National Kabaddi Championship at the Kabaddi Stadium yesterday. It was a repeat of last year's final and the 22nd crown for BGB out of 30 times.

Abdul Latif Siddiqui, Minister for Jute and Textiles was present as chief guest at the final match and distributed prizes among the teams.

Sarfaraz sinks Azad Sporting

SPORTS REPORTER

Khelaghar Samaj Kallyan Samity defeated Partex by five wickets in their Super League match of the First Division Cricket League at the Dhanmondi Cricket Stadium yesterday. Being put into bat first, Partex made 174-8 in 50 overs. In reply Khelaghar reached the target in 48.1 overs with Reazul Islam top scoring for them with 83 not out.

In the other game, Eskaton Sabuj Sangha eased past Azad Sporting Club winning by ten wickets at the BKSP-3 ground.

Batting first, Azad Sporting Club made a mere 58 runs in 21.5 overs thanks mainly due to the bowling of Sarfaraz Alam who took 7-21.

In reply, Eskaton reached the total in only 11.5 overs.

Fixing fears at Olympics

AFP, London

Fixing now poses the biggest threat to the integrity of the Olympics, the British minister for the 2012 London Games told the Sunday Times newspaper, citing illegal Asian betting rings.

Olympics minister Hugh Robertson said fixing had overtaken drugs cheats in terms of the threat posed to the reputation of the Games.

"You cannot underestimate the threat this poses because the moment that spectators start to feel that what they are seeing in front of them is not a true contest, that is when spectators stop turning up and the whole thing falls to pieces," he told the weekly broadsheet.

Only Indian

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England players dominated the Test XI of the year as six of them featured in the side, including ICC Test Player of the Year Alastair Cook, pace duo of James Anderson and Stuart Broad, middle-order batsmen Kevin Pietersen and Ian Bell and wicketkeeper Matt Prior.

Pakistan are represented by opener Mohammed Hafeez and off-spinner Saeed Ajmal. The other players in the Test XI are West Indian all-rounder Darren Bravo and South African fast bowler Dale Steyn.

In the ODI XI, Virender Sehwag, who struck individual ODI highest score of 219 against the West Indies recently, was chosen as opener. Australian Shane Watson was named as Sehwag's opening partner, followed by young Indian Virat Kohli. India's World Cup hero Yuvraj Singh was at number five, followed by Dhoni.

Paceman Zaheer Khan was the lone Indian bowler in the bowling line-up. Other players in the ODI XI are Sri Lankans Mahela Jayawardene and Lasith Malinga, Pakistanis Shahid Afridi and Saeed Ajmal and Australian fast bowler Mitchell Johnson.

TEST XI: Alastair Cook, Mohammad Hafeez, Rahul Dravid, Kevin Pietersen, Ian Bell, Darren Bravo, Matt Prior, Stuart Broad, Dale Steyn, Saeed Ajmal and James Anderson.

ODI XI: Virender Sehwag, Shane Watson, Virat Kohli, Mahela Jayawardene, Yuvraj Singh, Mahendra Singh Dhoni, Shahid Afridi, Mitchell Johnson, Lasith Malinga, Zaheer Khan and Saeed Ajmal.



Border Guard Bangladesh members celebrate at the Kabaddi Stadium yesterday after they won the Meizan National Kabaddi Championship, their 22nd such triumph.

PHOTO: STAR

SCG Test starts Tuesday

Venue will get its ton, but can Sachin have his?

Cricket

AFP, Sydney

Sachin Tendulkar's search for his elusive 100th international century fittingly takes him to the Sydney Cricket Ground (SCG) for Tuesday's second Test against Australia, an arena celebrating its own Test ton.

The "Little Master" came close to achieving the unique feat with his fluent 73 in the first innings of last week's Melbourne Test, where India succumbed to a 122-run defeat.

But the SCG, hosting its 100th Test, is one of 38-year-old Tendulkar's happy hunting grounds. He has scored three of his 51 Test hundreds there in seven innings and averages an incredible 221.33 at the ground.

Tendulkar has been stranded on 99 Test and one-day international centuries since scoring 111 against South Africa in the World Cup in March, but the odds are stacked in his favour in Sydney this week.

"You really think cosmos, the Almighty and the Hindu gods were going to allow him to score it (100th ton) anywhere but the SCG?" SCG Trust chairman Rodney Cavalier said in half-jest. "These things are preordained."

Tendulkar's returns at the SCG make for a compelling argument: 148 not out (1992), 241 not out (2004) and 154 not out (2008).

Former India captain Sourav Ganguly said that based on Tendulkar's batting form in Melbourne he is "guaranteed" to get his missing century in Australia.

"He looked very solid at the MCG on a pitch which had a fair bit of help for the quicks. His feet have moved superbly, which is an indication that his mind is thinking the right way," Ganguly said.

"I can guarantee you that if he keeps batting like this he will make a major impact on the remaining three Tests and probably get past that magic landmark in this country."

VVS Laxman, one of India's batting failures in Melbourne, is looking forward with relish to playing at the SCG, which statisti-

cally is his most productive scoring venue outside of India.

In five Test innings at the ground he has scored three hundreds and averages 96.20, a far cry from his desultory two and one last week at the MCG.

But for all of the runs from Tendulkar and Laxman, India have only won one of nine previous Tests at the ground and they cannot afford to fall 2-0 behind in the four-Test series.

Australia's pace trio, James Pattinson, Peter Siddle and Ben Hilfenhaus, took 19 of the 20 Indian wickets in Melbourne and helped rout the tourists for 169 in the second innings to bring off an emphatic win inside four days.

Ricky Ponting, who was the best performing Australian batsman with 62 and 60 in Melbourne, has scored the most Test runs at the SCG with 1,346 at 64.10, including five centuries.

England scored three centuries in their innings thrashing of Australia at the SCG a year ago and while spinners had a minimal effect on that outcome, the signs are that there will be more spin this week.

"Just from walking across the ground it looks a lot less green than it has been the last few years," senior Australian batsman Mike Hussey said Sunday.

"The last few years have been really seamer-friendly and there's been overhead conditions to help that as well, but it (now) looks definitely a lighter colour and generally it has slowed down a little bit and helped the spinners as the game's gone on," he said.

SQUADS

AUSTRALIA (from): Michael Clarke (captain), Brad Haddin, Ed Cowan, Ryan Harris, Ben Hilfenhaus, Michael Hussey, Nathan Lyon, Shaun Marsh, James Pattinson, Ricky Ponting, Peter Siddle, David Warner.

INDIA (from): Gautam Gambhir, Virender Sehwag, Rahul Dravid, Sachin Tendulkar, VVS Laxman, Virat Kohli, MS Dhoni (captain), Ravichandran Ashwin, Zaheer Khan, Ishant Sharma, Umesh Yadav, Pragyan Ojha.

But Mithun Ali and Ayub Dogar staged a fightback during a 104-run sixth wicket stand. The wicketkeeper struck 82 off 83 balls with the help of nine boundaries and a six.

Alauddin Babu and Mohammad Sami added 54 in the dying stages as Gazi Tank finished up on 229-9 in 50 overs.

Surjo Tarun had a similar start though the pace of Sami made it worse as Shafiu Alam was struck on the hand by the speedster.

Only Raja Ali prevailed with his 94-ball 42 but none of the others made an impression as the Jigatola-based club lost their second game in a row.

SCORES IN BRIEF

SHEIKH JAMAL: 225-8 in 50 overs (Mubarak 55, Shamsur 50; Forhad 3-40, Trego 2-50) ABAHANI: 227-8 in 47.4 overs (Riyad 51 not out, Sunny 39; Sujee 2-33, Shuvo 2-30) Result: Abahani won by two wickets.

MOHAMMEDAN: 215 all out in 49.4 overs (Rajin 59, Naeem 38; Abbas 6-36) PRIME DOLESHWAR: 182 all out in 47.4 overs (Manvinder 44, Mizanur 32; Naeem 3-35, Noor 2-30)

Result: Mohammedan won by 33 runs.

GAZI TANK: 229-9 in 50 overs (Mithun 82, Ayub 38; Shafiu 4-39, Raja 2-35) SURJO TARUN: 147-9 in 46.4 overs (Raja 42, Imran 39; Alauddin 3-27, Sami 2-14) Result: Gazi Tank won by 82 runs.

Biggies prevail

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and Trego shared five wickets as the Sheikh Jamal innings faltered from an excellent position of 202 for four in the slog overs.

Shamsur Rahman and Jehan Mubarak were dismissed in the 50s but neither converted it into big ones, which unhinged the Dhanmondi club's innings in the latter stages.

MOHAMMEDAN-PRIME

DOLESHWAR

Rajin Saleh and skipper Naeem Islam shared a 81-run fourth wicket stand to rescue Mohammedan from 67 for three.

The Sylhet batsman struck a half-century and Naeem made 38 but it was Yasin Mortuza's 17-ball 26 that took the Motijheel giants past the 200-mark.

Left-arm spinner Abbas had a fine day out with the ball, picking up six wickets for 36 runs in ten overs.

But Doleshwar never made a significant attempt at the chase and lost their way after the top-order got out. Openers Manvinder Singh and Mizanur Rahman made 44 and 32 respectively, but the rest folded quickly.

Naeem took three wickets while Yasin, Noor Hossain and Imtiaz Hossain took two each.

GAZI-SURJOTARUN

Shafiu Islam struck early for the lowly Surjo Tarun side as Gazi Tank were reduced to 37 for five in the twelfth over.

Trego the odd man

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glimpses of his strokeplay as he hammered Dollar Mahmud for four boundaries in an over during the Abahani innings.

"It's quite obvious to see I'm a relatively aggressive batsman. I have to slightly change a few things in my game. I was disappointed today not to kick on from 40-something to get a hundred and win the game easily," said the man who has turned into a journeyman cricketer off late as he also plays for Mashonaland Eagles in Zimbabwe's domestic tournaments.

Trego also became the third Englishman to don Abahani colours after Neil Fairbrother and Richard Illingworth who played in 1994, though it is an odd choice for the defending champions as Pakistani players are favourites among the club officials of Dhaka.

But the 30-year-old has already been received well at the club. "They're a great bunch of lads. My Bangla is not very good but all the guys are friendly. The officials have been fantastic, really looking after me. I am enjoying my stay so far," he said.

Amol, Sahrda's double

SPORTS REPORTER

Amol Roy and Sharmin Alam Sharda won both singles and doubles titles in men's and women's section of the Runner Group Victory Day Open Tennis Tournament which concluded at the National Tennis Complex in Ramna yesterday.

Amol outplayed Biplob Ram 6-1, 6-0 to win the singles title after he had won the men's doubles title pairing with Ranjan Ram as they beat Anwar Hossain and Dipu Lal pair 6-3, 7-5 in the final.

Sharda won the women's final as her opponent Ishita Afroz pulled out due to cramp midway through the second set. Ishita was leading at that stage by 6-2, 3-2. Earlier, Sharda and Sathi Sarker pair had won the women's doubles title beating Ishita and Ayesha Sultana pair 6-3, 6-3.

Mamun Bepary won the boys' (u-16) title, Rubel Hossain won boys' (u-12) title and Afrida won the girls' (u-12) title.

Mohammad Mofazzel Hossain, vice chairman of Runner Group, witnessed the match as chief guest and distributed prizes among the participants.

Fed eyes solid start

Tennis

AFP, Doha

Roger Federer believes the momentum he achieved from his finest finish to a season can launch him to a successful defence of the Qatar Open title and a flying start to Olympic year.

The Grand Slam record holder has gone 17 matches unbeaten and won three titles since the US Open in September, bringing hopes of five more wins and a fourth title in Doha to celebrate the arrival of 2012.

"It was my strongest finish and I'm proud of it," Federer said. "I'm already looking forward to the new season."

During this winning sequence Federer was back to somewhere near his best, raising hopes of ending a two-year Grand Slam drought at the Australian Open in a fortnight's time.

Federer has even allowed himself to talk about his chances of regaining the world number one spot, even though he is currently ranked behind both Novak Djokovic and Rafa Nadal.

"All of a sudden you play well and you win 17 matches in a row and you're back where you feel if you win a Slam or something, you're right in the conversation again, so that's interesting and excites me," Federer told the New York Times recently.

If his words sound rather optimistic, that is because Federer has a special incentive. Just one more week at the top would enable him to equal the record 286 weeks at number one achieved by Pete Sampras.

However Federer's greatest remaining ambition is an Olympic singles gold medal in July, which may be why he has dropped next month's Dubai Open amidst an extra full and exhausting 2012 calendar.

The other mushrooming Arabian Gulf city -- Doha -- remains very much in

Federer's plans. Next week it should provide a launch-pad for his ambitions, with good warm-up opposition for the Australian Open.

The top seed is Nadal, and the third seed Jo-Wilfried Tsonga, who not only beat Federer at Wimbledon but gave him a good tussle for the title in the ATP World Tour finals in London four weeks ago.

"I was more consistent in my head," Tsonga said of his encouraging 2011. By continuing this improvement he hopes to climb from his highest ever ranking of six into the top four in the coming year.

Another Frenchman, Gael Monfils, the likely fourth seed, could also influence the Qatar outcome -- and certainly if the impression he created in 2006 is anything to go by.

That year he performed a noisily applauded limbo dance at the players' party the night before the final, in which he gave Federer a good contest.

But it is the body and mind of Nadal which may attract most attention.

The French Open champion claims that a weakening of his drive contributed his to lose the world number one ranking to Novak Djokovic last year.

"Over the years you'll lose a little intensity," he told El Pais recently. "You burn with the (amount of) competition. For the past seven years I've been ranked in the top two."

"The main thing is to play again with the passion and intensity needed," he says.

Nadal also feels his game became too predictable, and that he needs to make a conscious effort to hit his ground strokes from inside the court more often. And he says he aims to make this a habit rather than wait till he faces top players before producing it.

If Nadal tests that new year's resolution with some assertive performances over the next few days, he could put himself in the frame to win the Doha title for the first time.



Amol Roy (L) and Sharmin Alam Sharda pose with their trophies of the Runner Group Victory Day Open Tennis Tournament at the National Tennis Complex in Ramna yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

Fed Cup finals from today

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who filled up the vacant positions do have the capacity to do well. With national players like Meshu, Komol, Yousuf, Sabuj and Raju in the side, I believe we will not be performing badly," said Titu adding he expects to reach the final of the tournament like the last season.

However, the strongest side on paper Muktiyoddha Sangsad have a real cause for concern as they have three of their star players -- striking duo Zahid Hasan

Emily and Mithun Chowdhury and new recruit Sunday Chizoba -- suspended. Emily and Mithun were served five match bans while Sunday got a two match ban following different incidents of indiscipline last season.

"It is not possible to make up for the losses of the three players but I think their substitutes can perform the job efficiently. Any coach can expect to win the title with the players that Muktiyoddha have," said a confident coach Shafiqul Islam Manik.

Manik may also miss the services of two new Brazilian recruits Lima and Rafael in the first match as their international transfer certificates have not yet arrived till yesterday.

With a youth-based and mediocre strength side, Mohammedan team management are taking this tournament as a trial for the professional league, and are hoping that their former player-turned-coach Emeka can inspire the youngsters to something good.

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS
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21 Actress Moore

22 And others (Lat.)
23 Tenderizing sauces
27 "— Doubtfire"
29 Competent
30 Barbie or Raggedy Ann
32 Take to the seas
34 Barber-shop treatment
37 Goes up
39 Dance to rock music
42 Weighing device
44 Old theater letters
45 Wading bird
46 Poi base
50 Disen-cumber
51 Caustic solution
52 Morning moisture
53 Away from NNW

Solution time: 24 mins.
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IVY IDLE IRON
SAN MOSS VEIN
CLASS REUNIONS
NUS MID
DATUM EEL BYE
DRAB CBS FAIR
TEX JOB SLANG
PUN ALA
GLASS STRUGGLE
HULA IBITS AIL
ABEL SASH SKA
TEEM TREY PEN

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CRYPTOQUIP

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Saturday's Cryptoquip: WHY OFFER PRECIOUS TREASURES TO WASTEFUL CHILDREN? SURELY THEY COULD BE PUT TO BETTER YOUTH.
Today's Cryptoquip Clue: E equals D