

Half-century for Bhupathi

India's Mahesh Bhupathi claimed his 50th doubles title on Saturday when he and compatriot Rohan Bopanna clinched a 6-4, 3-6, 10-5 win over Poland's Mariusz Fyrstenberg and Marcin Matkowski in the Dubai Open final. Bhupathi and Bopanna joined forces full-time at the beginning of the season, with their eyes firmly set on the London Olympics. "It's amazing," said Bhupathi, reflecting on the strong expat crowd support he and Bopanna



Relief for Sk Jamal

SPORTS REPORTER

Defending champions Sheikh Jamal Dhanmondi Club bounced back from two consecutive losses as they handed a 2-1 defeat to Mohammedan SC in their Grameenphone Bangladesh Premier League encounter at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday. Femi Orunimi and Thoman Yoko Samnick struck one goal each for Sheikh Jamal while Wahed Ahmed pulled one back for the Black and Whites in an entertaining display of football. With their second win in six matches, Sheikh Jamal leapfrog to fourth position from eighth while Mohammedan stay at eighth position with five points from as many matches. Sheikh Jamal, who have been struggling since the takeover by new coach Abu Yusuf and were recently embroiled in a controversy over their two foreign recruits being forced to resign, showed no lack of motivation in yesterday's match as they distributed the ball well and launched number of attacks in the fast-paced game. Mohammedan too played better than their previous matches, though were unlucky not to snatch a point as Nigerian striker Basden Wilcox missed an open-net chance. However, it was Sheikh Jamal who took the lead in the ninth minute, courtesy of

Femi Orunimi's free-kick exploits. The Nigerian, who rattled the woodwork in the fourth minute from a free-kick, stunned the Black and Whites hitting the target with screamer of a free-kick from 35 yards out. The Nigerian winger then turned provider on the 22nd minute as his well-flighted rebounded off a defender before Cameroonian Yoko Samnick placed the ball home. Sheikh Jamal kept creating chances and on the 39th minute, Samnick played on unmarked Kester Akon inside the box but Akon's weak shot was well gripped by Mohammedan goalkeeper Arifuzzaman Himel, who later thwarted a few more attempts to keep the margin low. Mohammedan stepped up the attack in the second half and reimbursed a goal in the 52nd minute as young striker Wahed, being set up with a long ball from Yeasin, dodged past two Sheikh Jamal defenders before letting loose a low drive from outside the box past former national custodian Aminul Haque. Sheikh Jamal created two more chances, but on both occasions, Mohammedan goalkeeper Himel rescued his side before they themselves came close to equalising the margin. With seven minutes left to the normal time, Tapu set up Wilcox for an easy finish, but the Nigerian's shot sailed over the bar, much to the frustration of the Black and Whites faithful, who later stormed the pitch and created a chaotic situation in front of the

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Sheikh Jamal midfielder Yoko Samnick (C) is the centre of celebration after his goal sealed a 2-0 victory over Mohammedan in their Bangladesh Premier League encounter at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

Kamal finds Pakistan safe

AFP, Lahore

The head of the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) said Sunday he would try to bring international cricket back to Pakistan after voicing satisfaction with security arrangements in the country. Pakistan have invited Bangladesh to tour next month in a bid to revive international cricket in the country after it was suspended following the terrorists attacks on the Sri Lankan team bus in Lahore three years ago. A nine-member Bangladesh security delegation arrived early Friday and inspected arrangements in Islamabad, Karachi and Lahore. They were briefed over the possible security setup by the interior ministry in Islamabad. BCB president AHM Mustafa Kamal said: "We are satisfied with the arrangements which would be in place for our team and now

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Chelsea sack Villas-Boas

Football

AFP, London

Andre Villas-Boas has been sacked by Chelsea after less than a season in charge at Stamford Bridge, the Premier League club announced in a statement on their website on Sunday. Former Chelsea midfielder Roberto Di Matteo, who had been working as Villas-Boas's assistant, has been appointed interim manager until the end of the season. Villas-Boas, who arrived from Porto in June 2011, has paid the price for a dismal run of results that left Chelsea in fifth place and on the verge of elimination from this

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Mushy to read with the kids

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh captain Mushfiqur Rahim will visit a Room to Read classroom library today at Rupa government primary school in Kazimura village of Bijoynagar upazilla in Brahmanbaria. In an hour-long stay during the morning, Mushfiqur will take part in different reading-based games with the students. The classroom library was established by the Bangladesh chapter of Room to Read, an international organisation working to promote literacy and gender equality, with funding from the International Cricket Council to provide the schoolchildren with access to proper books and enhance their reading habit. The Room to Read is supporting 279 schools in Sirajganj and Brahmanbaria while also supporting girls to continue secondary education.

Mashrafe, Tamim fit

Cricket

SPORTS REPORTER

The national selectors have received the fitness reports of Mashrafe Bin Mortaza and Tamim Iqbal with both having been passed fit. But the final discussion on the Tigers' 15-member squad for the Asia Cup was still held back as the Akram Khan-led committee are awaiting the return of AHM Mustafa Kamal, the Bangladesh Cricket Board president. "We didn't hold a meeting today [Sunday] but we did receive fitness reports of the two and Mashrafe [Bin Mortaza] and Tamim [Iqbal] are fit," said Akram yesterday, though the three-member panel didn't hold a meeting as was earlier said. Upon Kamal's return, the selectors will hold a meeting and await his approval before announcement as the hosts can apparently take an extra day to declare Asia Cup squads. The delay would also mean that the training camp will probably begin on the originally announced March 7 for the tournament that begins three days later. But the selectors will breathe a huge sigh of relief with the fitness reports of fast bowler Mashrafe and batsman Tamim as they didn't really have a lot of options lined up in either department. The left-handed opening bats-

man, despite missing much of the Bangladesh Premier League, is still the best option. Mashrafe too would perfectly slot in as the new-ball bowler as paceman Rubel Hossain is all but certain to miss the four-nation tournament. But if one takes a look at the last ODI squad selected, for the Pakistan series back in December, some of the faces may not find themselves this time around. Question marks will be raised over Alok Kapali, Forhad Reza and Naeem Islam as the trio haven't had much of a fruitful Premier League or BPL campaign, due to a lack of form and opportunities. The selectors could recall Mohammad Ashraful, who was the second highest run-getter among the locals in the Twenty20 tournament, while also consider Junaed Siddiqui (good BPL showing) and Jahurul Islam (good form during the Dhaka Premier League). Among the bowlers, the selectors could pick an extra spinner with only Mashrafe and Shafiul using the new ball as the local left-armers handled the new white ball quite effectively during the BPL. If another left-arm spinner is added, Enamul Haque Jr could make a return after good performances throughout the season in all formats.

LOCAL snippets

SPORTS REPORTER

The City Bank Limited has become the ticket selling partner for the Asia Cup 2012, which will start at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium (SBNS) in Mirpur with a match between hosts Bangladesh and Pakistan on March 11. The bank will be responsible for the tournament's ticket sales and distribution. Details of the branches selling the tickets and prices will be revealed at a press conference in this regard at the SBNS at 12:30 pm today.

Baridhara hold Wari
Wari Club were held to a goalless draw by Utter Baridhara in their Premier Bank Bangladesh Championship League match at the Birshreshtha Mostafa Kamal Stadium in Kamalapur yesterday. The draw keeps Wari at the top of the table with 11 points from 6 matches while Uttar Baridhara follow the leaders in second position with 7 points from 5 matches.

Pranticbeat Friends
Prantic Krira Chakra defeated Friends Social Welfare Organisation 3-2 in the Destiny Group Dhaka Metropolis 2nd Division Football League match at the Birshreshtha Mostafa Kamal Stadium in Kamalapur yesterday. Sajib scored two goals in the 7th and 90th minutes

Jones impressed but confused

Cricket

SPORTS REPORTER

Dean Jones was "very impressed" with the standard of cricket in the Bangladesh Premier League but remained confused with the rules of the competition. In a column in the Sydney Morning Herald on Sunday, the former Australia batsman shared his experience as the technical director of the Chittagong Kings. He however did not mention his alleged spats with Tamim Iqbal and whether his premature exit had anything to do with the falling out. "It's not all bad news, however. I was involved with the Chittagong Kings and I was very impressed with the standard of the BPL," wrote Jones. But he wrote in detail how he was fined by the match referee for walking onto the field during Chittagong's home game against Duronto Rajshahi. "I was fined Tk 15,000 Bangladeshi (\$A170) by match referee Mike Procter for being on the ground after 10 overs when the strategic time-out was employed. "I registered an appeal for three reasons: first, the team wasn't given any rules on what we could and could not do throughout the tournament; second, the playing staff is allowed to enter the ground in the Indian Premier League and other teams have done this during the tournament. "Lastly, the third umpire said to me as we walked out together, that he "didn't think" I was allowed out on the ground. When I asked whether he "didn't think" I was allowed on the ground or he knew that I was not allowed to enter the ground, he said he "didn't know". I am still awaiting a response from Procter," he wrote.



Australia opener David Warner celebrates his century against Sri Lanka during the first final of the Commonwealth Bank Series at the Gabba in Brisbane yesterday. Warner's 163 helped Australia to a 15-run victory.

PHOTO: AFP

Australia take lead in high-scoring 1st final

Cricket

AFP, Brisbane

David Warner scored a magnificent 163 as Australia downed a gallant Sri Lanka by 15 runs in the first tri-series one-day international final on Sunday. Warner, whose previous highest ODI score was 74, smashed 13 fours and two sixes in his 157-ball innings to lead Australia to an imposing total of 321 for six after skipper Michael Clarke won the toss and chose to bat. After a bright start, the Sri Lankans fell behind the run rate as wickets began to fall, slumping to 144-6 before an entertaining 73 from Nuwan Kulasekara and 60 from Upul Tharanga kept them in touch. The pair put on 104 runs from only 70 balls -- including 68 runs in the five-over batting powerplay -- to get the Sri Lankans right back in the match. However, the target proved too great as they fell just short in a hugely entertaining first final. "I was thinking you can't lose the game from that position (144-6), that's for sure," Clarke said. "It doesn't matter how much you win by so I'm really happy with the end result. Our

performance with the bat was outstanding, the start we got from Davey (Warner) and Matthew Wade was just what we've been looking for. "But we've got a lot of work to do with our powerplay. Our bowling (during the powerplays) hasn't been good enough this whole series and unfortunately it continues to let us down. "Under pressure we're not executing." Part-time spinner David Hussey was the unlikely bowling hero for Australia with 4-43, while all-rounder Shane Watson chipped in with 3-33 including two vital wickets in the final overs. But the real star of the day was Warner, who finally delivered on the ODI stage after starring in both Tests and T20s for Australia. The 25-year-old left-hander was in imperious touch as he became only the seventh Australian to pass 150 in a one-day international, batting through the entire innings until he was bowled on the last ball of the 50th over by medium pacer Dhammika Prasad. Warner also passed Englishman David Gower (158) to record the highest ODI score by any player at the Gabba. "The first 50 runs were a bit scratchy -- I feel like I didn't hit one ball out of the middle

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