

Star SPORT

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Boycott peps up Bell

Former England cricket captain Geoffrey Boycott revealed how he gave a struggling Ian Bell a pep-talk prior to his classy 61 that pushed England into a winning position at Lord's against the West Indies.

"When I gave him his 75th Test cap this week, I told him he was probably the best batsman in the world last year," the Daily Star quoted Boycott, as saying.

"He's had a lean patch of late and I told him it's a test of character and temperament and how you deal with it. It's just a matter of gritting your teeth and getting through it," he added.

—ANI



Chelsea heroes Peter Cech and Didier Drogba celebrate with the Champions League trophy in Munich on Saturday. The Blues won their first crown after beating Bayern Munich in penalties.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Drogba's coup de grace

REUTERS, Munich



Didier Drogba scored Chelsea's goal and their winning Champions League penalty against Bayern Munich on Saturday and then solemnly appeared to say his farewells.

The 34-year-old Ivory Coast striker capped his eight years in London by lifting the trophy that his boss Roman Abramovich has longed for since buying the club in 2003. Then he was named man of the match.

But the big striker, who has failed to reach agreement with the club over a new contract, accepted the accolade with what sounded like a valedictory speech and side-stepped questions about his future.

"I don't think we can take decisions in emotional moments like this. The most important thing is not my future, the most important thing is what we achieved today," he told reporters after

the astonishing victory.

"I want to say thank you to all the players I've been playing with since I've been here and all the managers. They have improved me as a player and as a person."

The exuberant Ivorian, who delighted fans and worried club security by dancing on the roof of the team bus when Chelsea won their first English title in 50 years in his first season at the club, said he just felt very happy.

"Today it's a great day for the club, for our fans, for the players. I don't really know if there's enough words to describe how I feel now," he said.

The striker has developed a knack of scoring in finals, hitting home in Chelsea's 2-1 FA Cup final over Liverpool earlier this month, when he became the first man in the FA Cup to score in four finals.

But Saturday's 88th-minute header against the run of play after Bayern had gone ahead five minutes earlier, wiped out the misery of

Chelsea's defeat on penalties four years ago against Manchester United in Moscow, when he was sent off.

"In Moscow it was very difficult. It was very painful for the players, for the club and the fans and today we managed to change all that in an amazing game, equalising in the last minutes and then with the penalty shootout," he said.

Drogba, demonstrative and histrionic on the pitch as he is quietly courteous and softly spoken off it, has divided opinion in English football, but few would deny his impact on the game during the time that Chelsea have won two English titles four FA Cups and now the Champions League.

He said he had felt calm and confident taking the last penalty despite missing one earlier this year in the African Nations Cup final.

"Before going to take it I still had in my head what happened in the African Nations Cup where I could have won the cup for my country.

"At the same time Petr Cech was a fantastic

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Tigers excited to start training



SPORTS REPORTER

The Tigers returned to business yesterday at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur to prepare for the tri-nation T20 tournament in Zimbabwe in June.

Captain Mushfiqur Rahim, Shakib Al Hasan, Tamim Iqbal, Mohammad Ashraful and Alok Kapali did not join the conditioning camp for the 27 selected cricketers. Shakib and Tamim have IPL commitments, Ashraful was in London while Mushfiqur and Kapali are on leave due to family commitments.

There was a common sentiment among the players that the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) have taken a good initiative by arranging some T20 matches before the ICC Twenty20 World Cup to be held in September in Sri Lanka.

"Everyone is fresh after a good break. I think everybody enjoyed the break after a gruelling season. This camp will help us get back to full fitness. I must thank the board for arranging some T20 matches before the World Cup, otherwise we would have faced a lot of problems," said Mashrafe Bin Mortaza, who was donning a new look with a shaven head.

"You know, even our two key players Shakib and Tamim have not gotten enough opportunities to play in the IPL, especially Tamim who will unfortunately return with-

out playing a single match. Therefore, the T20 matches in Zimbabwe and Trinidad and Tobago will help us a lot before the World Cup," he added.

Experienced campaigner Abdur Razzak echoed the sentiments of the "Narail Express" and said that they joined the camp with the same spirit that they had during their impressive Asia Cup campaign at home.

"The break was really great because you know we had a very busy schedule in the last eight-nine months. Everyone is fresh. Our good performance in the Asia Cup is still fresh in our minds. This camp will help us regain fitness before the Zimbabwe trip," said the left-arm spinner.

Opener Imrul Kayes however believed that their fitness level is not too bad as they were playing regularly not too long ago.

"Everyone joined the camp in good spirits because we performed very well in our last international tournament (Asia Cup) where we played the final. I don't think the fitness is a big issue because we have played lot of cricket in the last few months. This camp however helps everybody to regain full fitness," said Kayes while appreciating the board's initiative in arranging some international matches during the off-season.

Pacer Shafiqul Islam, who had suffered a shoulder injury during the Asia Cup, also joined the camp but informed that he will need fifteen to twenty more days to get back his full fitness.



PHOTOS: STAR

Former Bangladesh captain Mashrafe Bin Mortaza, wearing a wig to hide the shaven head, enjoys a chat with teammate Nasir Hossain during national team's practice session at the SBNS yesterday. (R) New-look Mashrafe.

9-wicket wins for SK Jamal, MSC

SPORTS REPORTER

Sheikh Jamal Dhanmondi Club continued their good form, posting a nine-wicket victory against Dipali Jubo Shangha in the 4th Women's Club Cricket League at BKSP yesterday.

Dipali Jubo Shangha were bundled out for 49 runs in 31.2 overs. Zinnat Asia was the only one to reach double figures, making 21 runs.

Sripali picked up three wickets for seven runs while Jahanara Alam and Panna Ghosh took two wickets each.

In reply, Sheikh Jamal reached the target of 50 losing only one wicket in 12.2 overs.

Mahmuda Khan scored 19 and Ayesha Akter added 16 runs.

In the day's other match, Mohammedan Sporting Club also recorded a nine-wicket victory over Kalabagan Krira Chakra.

Kalabagan were all out for 60 in 39.4 overs. Number eleven Urmay Khatun was the top-scorer with 13 runs.

Shaila Sharmin claimed two wickets conceding 10 runs.

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Referee Jasimuddin (C) shows red card (second yellow) to Muktijoddha forward Mithun Chowdhury for handling the ball during their Grameenphone Bangladesh Premier League match against Rahmatganj at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday. The striker had just scored his second goal of the match a minute earlier. His strike partner Sunday Chizoba (L) scored two as well.

PHOTO: STAR

Muktis' goal-fest on

SPORTS REPORTER



Mithun Chowdhury celebrated his return to form with another brace to help title contenders Muktijoddha Sangsada to a 4-0 win over 10-man Rahmatganj MFS in their Grameenphone Bangladesh Premier League encounter at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

The diminutive striker, who scored two in their previous match against Feni Soccer Club, came off the bench yesterday to score two goals that took him to four goals for the season. However, the end of the match was not pleasant for Mithun as he unnecessarily handled the ball to pick up his second yellow card one minute before the end to see the marching order, which will also rule him out of their next match against Arambagh KS.

Nigerian striker Sunday Chizoba struck a brace too under the floodlights as the rest of the professional football league matches have been shifted to a 6pm start considering scorching heat.

With their eighth victory in 13 matches, the All Reds take their points tally to 27, three behind leaders Abahani while Rahmatganj stay second from bottom with nine points from 13 outings.

Muktijoddha expectedly dominated the game from the outset and the expulsion of Rahmatganj's winger Shirfin Ahmed Rony in 20th minute following an off-the-ball incident made the All Reds even more dominant. The first goal came even before that incident, in the seventh minute.

Brazilian midfielder De Souza Lima put a

through-pass from their own half and Nigerian Sunday raced past two Rahmatganj defenders to control the ball before entering the box and coolly placing the ball on the left-hand side of the advancing goalkeeper MN Shakil to give Muktijoddha the lead.

And after Rony got himself sent off, the Old Dhaka Outfit never appeared really troubling the Muktijoddha backline despite playing attacking football.

Muktijoddha coach Shafiqul Islam Manik sent on Mithun Chowdhury in place of Nigerian Basden Wilcox and the local striker immediately made his mark by doubling the lead in the 38th minute as he placed a Mamunul Islam chip into the net from inside the box.

The margin could have been bigger in the first half had two goals struck by Sunday and Lima, not been cancelled due to off-side.

After resumption, Muktijoddha stepped up the attack and yielded more scoring chances before Sunday made it 3-0 after playing a one-two with Mithun on 69th minute while Sunday turned provider for the fourth in the 89th Mithun, which Mithun tapped home from close range.

"We can't think of a draw, we have to win every game," said Muktijoddha coach Manik. "I am happy with the way the boys performed as they controlled the match from the begging."

Rahmatganj coach Mahmudul Haq Lition blamed lack of practice for the defeat.

"Of the 11 players, five have been fielded without practice as they are not regular in practice," said Lition adding that he would resign from his post if things are not corrected.

Women's hockey

SPORTS REPORTER

Kamrunnesa School and Narail District completed the semifinal line-up for the UCB First Women's Hockey as they defeated Anandomoyi School and Bandarban District in their respective group matches at the Maulana Bhashani National Hockey Stadium yesterday.

Fabiya Nushrat Riya and Rakhi Halder scored two field goals as Kamrunnesa School defeated Anandomoyi School 2-0.

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Div-I b'ball

SPORTS REPORTER

Eagles outplayed Josephites by 80-34 points in their match of the Citycell First Division Basketball League at the Dhanmondi Basketball Gymnasium yesterday.

Shahin caged highest 43 points and Emelyn netted 14 for Eagles while Rizvy scored 14 points for Josephites.

Eagles had earlier defeated Old DOHS by 74-23 points in their first match on the opening day on Saturday. Cantonians had a 55-52 point win over Wraiths on the same day.