

Star SPORT

DHAKA SATURDAY JULY 14, 2012, E-MAIL: sports@thedailystar.net

Kewell voted greatest ever

Former Liverpool and Leeds United star Harry Kewell has been voted Australia's greatest ever footballer.

Kewell was awarded the honour, which was decided by public voting and the input of a panel of experts, at a ceremony late Thursday in Sydney.

The 33-year-old, who returned recently to England after a season in the A-League with Melbourne Victory, was not present to collect the award but described it as "an incredible honour".

More than 15,000 public votes were cast during the selection process, while a panel of current and former players,



Mohammedan forward Istiaque Ahmed (L) goes past the Sonali Bank goalkeeper to score one of his three goals during their 7-0 win in the Green Delta Insurance Premier Division Hockey League at the Maulana Bhasani Hockey Stadium yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

Tigers undercooked before practice T20s

Cricket

SPORTS REPORTER

Poor conditions at the Civil Service Cricket Club in Belfast, where the Tigers will play all three games of their Twenty20 series against Ireland, could play spoilsport as Bangladesh gear up for the Ireland leg of their Europe tour.

The Tigers are scheduled to take on Ireland XI in the early afternoon (5:30pm Bangladesh Standard Time) and the Northern Cricket Union President's XI in the evening game (10:00pm BST) at The Green in Comber on Monday, and there's the threat of them going into the games without much cricket practice.

As they attempted to train at Stormont, the conditions haven't been up to scratch due to the unrelenting rain over the past month in the Northern Ireland capital. They had to be content with some stretching and warm-up football on Thursday, concerning the team manager about the lack of a proper net session ahead of the two practice Twenty20s.

"It has been raining for the last month and the ground is poor. So we are a bit con-

cerned whether we can finish a complete session of cricket practice," said manager Tanjeeb Ahsan Saad. "Though the sun came up in the last two days, the ground and the wicket's sustainability to hold a session remained to be seen."

However there are no concerns about the weather anymore as, according to Saad, the temperatures haven't dropped as was expected. "It is cold but not unbearably so," he informed.

Meanwhile, Ireland have recalled Boyd Rankin to their 15-man squad for the three-match series, after the Warwickshire fast bowler demonstrated his recovery from a foot injury sustained in April.

Rankin took 15 wickets during Ireland's successful ICC World Twenty20 qualification campaign in the UAE in March but he has only played second-XI cricket since then. Ireland will take on Bangladesh in three T20 matches, the first of which takes place on Wednesday, as part of their World Twenty20 preparations.

"It's obviously been a frustrating time sitting on the sidelines but it's great to be back bowling again," Rankin said. "The weather

SEE PAGE 17 COL 6

Unstoppable MSC

Hockey

SPORTS REPORTER

Title contenders Mohammedan SC extended their winning run in the Green Delta Insurance Premier Division Hockey League with an emphatic 7-0 win over Sonali Bank at the Maulana Bhasani Hockey Stadium yesterday.

The seventh straight win not only put Mohammedan on the top in the 11-team points table with 21 points, three ahead of Abahani but also gave Sonali Bank their first defeat in the league.

Everyone was expecting a mouth-watering clash between the two unbeaten sides, but the star-studded Mohammedan gave Sonali Bank no room to react in the nearly one-sided affair.

Sonali Bank came into the match on the back of five straight victories but they looked ill-equipped against the Black and Whites and conceded the first goal in the very second minute, thanks to a brilliant penalty converted by Mamunur Rahman Chayan, who doubled the margin in the tenth minute, taking the same route.

After going down two goals, Sonali Bank nearly pulled off a goal with a combination

of Pakistani duo Shahzad Nasir and Mohammad Imran but the latter failed to keep the ball on target from a one-on-one situation against Mohammedan's veteran goalkeeper Mahub Ullah Shakil.

The Motijheel-based outfit widened the margin in the 16th minute as Hong Kong recruit Istiaque Ahmed nicely placed home a Sheikh Mohammad Nannu push before he struck his second goal playing a neat one-two with Pakistan Tareq Aziz two minutes later. Tareq then made it 5-0 converting a penalty corner in the 26th minute to give the Black and Whites a comfortable lead going into the break.

After resumption, Mohammedan took a foot off the gas and allowed the opposition to have some control. However, Mohammedan still created a number of chances but goalkeeper Probir Ghosh denied them before Istiaque scored his third goal with a fierce hit from the right-side of the box in the 56th minute. Nannu completed the rout in the 65th minute changing the direction of Aziz's fierce hit.

Sonali Bank had two penalty corners in the second half but both of them went to waste as the bankers left the field without a single goal for the first time in six matches.

DIV-I HANDBALL

Prime SC unbeaten champs

SPORTS REPORTER

Prime Sports Club emerged unbeaten champions in the Orient Bread First Division Handball League after defeating Arambagh KS in the last match at the Shaheed M Mansur Ali Handball Stadium yesterday.

Prime SC beat Arambagh 39-22 after dominating the first half with a 19-9 lead as Emdad led the attack with 16 goals while Arif chipped in with eight goals for the champions, who will play in the Premier Division from the next season.

Arambagh KS finished behind champions Prime SC with 12 points, three less than the champions. Arif of Prime SC was named best player of the league.

BPL-FICA battle rages on

Cricket

SPORTS REPORTER

The war of words between the Bangladesh Premier League and Federation of International Cricketers Association continued when CEO Tim May blasted BPL chairman Gazi Ashraf Hossain's suggestions of FICA forging a "hate campaign" against the Twenty20 competition.

Ashraf had told The Daily Star on Thursday that FICA wants to sully the BPL's name and the outstanding player payment figure it stated in a media release on Wednesday -- \$600,000 was just part of their imagination.

May however denied the allegations, saying, "I have noted that the chairman of the BPL has come out with some words to the effect that only an amount of \$70k is owed to players from the inaugural BPL event. He also alleges that FICA has some plot to destroy the event," he said.

"This is a total nonsense and a shallow and deliberate action of BPL to take attention away from a BPL administration that is clearly either out of its depth or completely oblivious to the facts of the situation. FICA's sole objective is to ensure BPL and fran-

chises act in accordance with the agreements that they have entered.

"Under those Agreements, the franchises and the BCB (in its capacity as guarantor of player payments) owe a number of players, both foreign and domestic hundreds of thousands of dollars

"We are not politically motivated -- Bangladesh players are members of FICA -- and a well-run BPL is obviously of benefit to all, particularly Bangladesh players. Why on earth would we mount a campaign that will work against our members' interests?" he added.

According to May, the blame clearly lies with BPL and the Bangladesh Cricket Board.

"Our simple obligation to players is to ensure that they are paid as their employment contracts state and to provide advice going forward to players as to the relative risks entering into various events, whether those risks be financial, safety or corruption.

"We make such recommendations free of fear, favour or discrimination. FICA, players and their managers, have tried for months to work with the franchises, BPL and BCB to address this matter. Players and their managers simply have got tired of the endless string of broken promises and excuses provided by these administrators.

SEE PAGE 17 COL 1

WOMEN'S FOOTBALL

Sabina scores nine more

SPORTS REPORTER

Sabina slotted nine goals to power Satkhira a comprehensive 13-0 win over Jhenaidah in the KFC Women's Football Super League at the Kushtia Stadium yesterday.

Apart from Sabina's nine, Rowshanara and Suriya Sultana struck two goals each for Satkhira who thrashed Magura 19-0 in their opening match, riding on 12 goals from Sabina.

At the same venue, Narail blanked hosts Kushtia 6-0, thanks to a treble from Bipasha while Rony Akhter and Padmabati scored twice and once respectively.

At the Khagrachari Stadium, Chittagong beat hosts Khagrachari 1-0 while Rangamati defeated Laxmipur 5-0.

Hattricks from Rupa and Bilkis helped Jessore outplay Bogra 8-1 at the Joypurha Stadium where hosts Joypurhat defeated Naogaon 3-0 in the other match.

At the Nilphamari Stadium, Thakurgaon outplayed Kurigram 4-0 while Rangpur beat Nilphamari 4-1, thanks to a hattrick from Bhabna.

Tangail recorded a 3-0 win over Khulna at the Bangladesh Agriculture University ground in Mymensingh while Faridpur beat the hosts BAU 2-0.

Cowan's ton in county debut

AFP, London

Ed Cowan sent a message to Australia's selectors as the opener marked his County Championship debut for Gloucestershire with a century on the second day against Essex at Cheltenham on Thursday.

With Australian batsmen enduring a torrid time during their recent 4-0 thrashing in the one-day international series against England, there could be places up for grabs when Michael Clarke's team return for the Ashes next year and Cowan underlined his credentials with an innings of 103 to help Gloucestershire reach 284 for four in this Second Division clash.

Cowan was denied a central contract when Australian

SEE PAGE 17 CO

Irfan in for Vinay

AFP, New Delhi

Fast bowler Irfan Pathan has replaced injured Vinay Kumar in India's squad for the upcoming series of limited-overs matches in Sri Lanka, the country's cricket board announced on Friday.

"Vinay Kumar suffered a Grade I right hamstring injury while training. He will hence not be available for the forthcoming tour of Sri Lanka," the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) said in a statement.

"The selection committee has named Irfan Pathan as his replacement in the Indian squad."

Left-arm pacer Pathan has so far bagged 165 wickets in 115 one-day internationals.

India will play five one-day internationals in Sri Lanka, starting in Hambantota on July 21, plus a one-off Twenty20 match on August 7.

Indian batting superstar Sachin Tendulkar, the world's leading scorer in both Test and one-day cricket, has already opted out of the tour.

Lee quits int'l cricket

AFP, Sydney

Australian pace bowler Brett Lee on Friday announced his retirement from international cricket after a 13-year career, saying his body and mind were no longer up to the stresses of touring.

The 35-year-old said a calf muscle strain that forced him home from Australia's recent one-day tour to Britain was the final straw after a string of setbacks caused by injuries.

"I woke up this morning and just felt like I was ready," Lee said, adding his original plan had been to play at September's World Twenty20 tournament in Sri Lanka as his international swansong.

"I think personally in a team environment you have to have 100 percent commitment -- mentally and physically," he told a press conference at the Sydney Cricket Ground.

"And I guess looking at the next few months I just didn't have that desire anymore."

"It wouldn't be fair on me, or my team if I went with that attitude... you get to the point in life where you say enough is enough."

Lee said he would continue to play the less demanding Twenty20 cricket in the Indian Premier League and the Australian Big Bash League.

Lee's calf injury was the latest in a long line of injuries that punctuated his playing career, of 310 Test wickets at 30.81 from 76 matches and 380 one-day international wickets at 23.36 from 221 matches.

He also endured side strains, a broken toe, ankle issues, stress fractures to his back, persistent elbow problems and appendicitis.

Lee was not offered a national contract in Cricket Australia's latest round of agreements, and decided not to take up a deal with his state side, New South Wales, for this coming summer.

Cricket Australia chief executive James Sutherland paid tribute to Lee's contribution to Australian cricket and as an inspiration to youngsters to take up the game.

"His record as a wicket-taker and leader of the attack is fantastic and speaks for itself but his resilience and ability to bounce back after numer-

ous injuries has also been impressive," Sutherland said.

"On top of this, and this is a significant part of his legacy, Brett inspired young Australians to play cricket and bowl fast."

Lee also became extremely popular in cricket-mad India where he wrote and recorded the song "You're the One For Me", which reached number two on the Indian charts and led to a role in his first Bollywood movie "Victory".

Lee said while he had enjoyed his cricket career, he was tired of being away from home for long periods and was looking forward to a different phase of his life.

"It's been a fantastic career and I've loved every minute of it, but it's stage two of my life now," he said.

"My holiday will be at home -- I'm sick of being away. That was on my

SEE PAGE 17 COL 1



Australian pace bowler Brett Lee takes a phone call as he walks on the Sydney Cricket Ground after announcing his retirement from international cricket in a media conference yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP