

Sanath bowled over by Madhuri

He almost developed cold feet before shaking a leg in front of Indian dancing diva Madhuri Dixit. But Sri Lankan master blaster Sanath Jayasuriya, who is back in his country after being eliminated from reality show "Jhalak Dikhhla Jaa 5", says he was especially overwhelmed with the great actress' warmth and the whole experience was "amazing" though "tough".

"The show is completely different from what I do in life but I enjoyed it thoroughly. The contestants are talented and hard working. The three wonderful judges (Madhuri, Karan Johar and Remo D'Souza) were really warm towards me,"



(L) Education Minister Nurul Islam shows some of his football skills prior to the start of the National School Football Tournament final at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday; (above) rival players tough it out amidst incessant rain in an absorbing contest that was locked 1-1 during the regulation time; (far left) players of the victorious Narayanganj school run for joy after their 3-2 win in shootout.

PHOTOS: ANISUR RAHMAN

Isdair class of 2011

The Narayanganj school prevail in tiebreaker

Football

SPORTS REPORTER

Isdair Rabeya Hossain High School of Narayanganj emerged undefeated champions of the National School Football Tournament after they defeated Kathirhat High School of Chittagong 4-3 in a gruelling final on the soggy pitch of the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

The school which produced the runners-up in the Bangabandhu Primary Gold Cup two years ago went one better in the senior group as they overcame a stiff challenge from the Chittagong school in normal time (1-1) and in extra time before clinching the victory in tiebreakers.

The incessant rain before the kick-off and the consequent waterlog did little to dampen the enthusiasm of the kids who have battled all the way through the upazila, zila, and divisional levels to get to the final. Isdair had won 15

matches on their way to the final conceding just a single goal while their opposition team Kathirhat too had won all 13 matches that they played.

Isdair, a school rich in football tradition which produced national stars like Mithun Chowdhury and other premier league stars, started at blistering pace despite the soggy pitch.

They got an early breakthrough in the 10th minute when Mithu teed off a freekick for the match's best player, midfielder Rabbi, to slot from the edge of the box and into the far corner of the net.

The celebration that followed was something to behold, as the youngsters from Narayanganj splashed in the shin deep mud by the sidelines. Kathirhat got back into the match after going a goal down and consistently threatened to get the equaliser before they got it in the 43rd minute when Abdullah converted a penalty kick. The pitch got even muddier as the game wore on and the boys

struggled to penetrate the opposition back line. The second half and the 20 minutes of extra time failed to add any more goals as both teams dominated fairly equal possession before the usual intrigue that penalty shootouts generate.

The two goalkeepers had most of the say in the shootout, as Rony saved two of the penalties for Isdair while his opposite number Shahjahan made a superb save before he had to take one on his own. Had this kick gone in, the tiebreakers would have gone into a sudden death, but Shahjahan's thunderous effort went straight at his opposite number, bringing an end to a gruelling final and an eight-month journey which began across 4800 schools of the country in December 2011.

The winners, for their effort received a cheque of Tk.10 lakh while the runners up got half the amount. The man of the final Rabbi Hossain, who scored the opener to

take his tournament tally to five, received Tk 1 lakh.

Isdair's coach and its chairman of governing council were overcome with emotions at this victory. The coach Mahmud Hossain Sujan said it was a dream-come-true for them.

"We offer free studentship to the boys who are good in sports. These boys do a lot of hard work, come to training on foot, but their devotion to football is exemplary. The boy who won the ma-of-the-match, Rabbi, is very poor as he is the son of a tempu (human hauler) driver. Boys like these are our inspiration", said Sujan.

Rabbi said he it was his dream to win the man of the final award and that he wants to contribute this sum to his family.

Earlier, the match started after dignitaries -- Minister of Education Nurul Islam Nahid, representatives of chief sponsors Islami Bank Limited, co-sponsors Plan Bangladesh

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day international wins in a row.

Pietersen, who still harbours hopes of helping England defend their World Twenty20 title in Sri Lanka in September, having been man of the tournament in the Caribbean two years ago, insisted once more that the team's packed schedule was a major barrier to a one-day return.

"I've said before that, if the schedule was right, if they could sort my schedule out, I would love to play for another three or four years in all forms of cricket," said Pietersen.

"But the schedule at the moment is a nightmare. I hope something can be sorted out."

If Pietersen is to play in the World Twenty20, England will have to move fast as the International Cricket Council deadline for naming the initial 30-man squads is July 18.

"I've always said I want to play in Twenty20," said Pietersen.

"But I needed to get away from the schedule. I cannot keep playing every single day's cricket. I've never been looked after. I cannot keep playing every warm-up game, I cannot keep practising every single day."

"There comes a time when I know what I need to do to be successful. I've got a young family and I cannot be on the treadmill all day, every day."

KP ready for U-turn

Cricket

AFP, London

Kevin Pietersen's retirement from one-day internationals could yet prove to be a brief interlude after he said Friday he would "love to play for another three or four years in all forms of cricket".

Pietersen, speaking after warming up for next week's first Test against his native South Africa with a superb unbeaten 234 for Surrey against county champions Lancashire, added he had held talks with the England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) about ending his limited overs retirement.

The 32-year-old, arguably England's most talented batsman, quit white ball internationals for his adopted country after team management refused him his wish to appear in Twenty20 matches while opting out of 50-over games.

However, the terms of an ECB central contract prevent players picking and choosing formats and team management held firm, fearing an exodus of leading names from the one-day side if they gave Pietersen his head.

As it happened, in Pietersen's absence England beat the West Indies 2-0 and thrashed Australia 4-0 to make it 10 one-



England and Surrey batsman Kevin Pietersen (L) walks off the field after finishing the day on an unbeaten 234 in the four-day County Championship match against Lancashire at Woodbridge Road in Guildford on Friday.

PHOTO: INTERNET

Champions felicitated

SPORTS REPORTER

The Asian Hockey Federation (AHF) Cup winners Bangladesh were accorded a reception at the Bangladesh Olympic Association auditorium yesterday where the team were rewarded with Tk 5.5 lakh, an amount jointly contributed by the Ministry for Youth and Sports and Bangladesh Hockey Federation.

The Bangladesh national hockey team had successfully retained the AHF Cup in April when they became undefeated champions in the second-tier tournament of the region. Each of the players also got a blazer and a mobile phone for their effort.

The programme also accorded welcome to the new president of Bangladesh Hockey Federation Air Marshal Enamul Bari. The outgoing president Ziaur Rahman

Tigers enjoy first workout

Cricket

SPORTS REPORTER

The Bangladesh team had their first full-fledged practice session in Belfast yesterday ahead of their practice matches to be held tomorrow at The Green in Comber.

"The weather is a little cloudy and cold but still the players had their batting and bowling practice today. And the good news is that after five weeks Ireland's domestic Saturday league matches could be held today," team operations manager Tanjeeb Ahsan Saad told the Daily Star over telephone.

Before the three-match T20 series, 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 tomorrow and Saad informed that everybody is fit for the matches.

Left-handed opener Tamim Iqbal, who had missed training and practice matches at the home through injury, took part in a net ses-

sion and is okay to play the practice matches. Tamim had endured a grade one tear on his left quadriceps while batting against Zimbabwe at the Harare Sports Club during the tri-nation T20 series last month.

"Everybody is fine and enjoying today's session and there is no injury problem. Tamim also batted in the net and he is okay," added Saad.

Due to the unrelenting rain over the past month in the Northern Ireland capital, the conditions at the Civil Service Cricket Club in Belfast, where the Tigers will play all three games of their Twenty20 series against Ireland, is not satisfactory at all but Saad hoped that everything will be okay by the time the series gets underway on July 18.

The second and third match will take place on July 20 and 21 respectively. The Bangladesh team then travel to Netherlands on July 22 to play a T20 International against Scotland on July 24 and the hosts on July 25.

Mushfiqur Rahim's men are playing the T20 matches as part of their preparation for the ICC World Twenty20 to be held in Sri Lanka in September.

TT tourney starts today

SPORTS REPORTER

The Lotto Cup Open Table Tennis Competition starts today at the Shaheed Tajuddin Ahmed Indoor Stadium in Paltan with 158 players taking part.

The competition features four main events -- men's singles and doubles and women's singles and doubles -- along with a non-seeded competition for U-15 boys involving participants from 10 schools of the capital.

The four-day event has a total budget of Tk 3.5 lakh, out of which Italian Sportswear giant Lotto will provide Tk 2.5 lakh while the rest will be borne by the Bangladesh Table Tennis Federation.

Minister for Information and Culture Abul Kalam Azad will inaugurate the event in the afternoon where Italian ambassador to Bangladesh Giorgio Guglielmino will be present as special guest.