



Information and Cultural Affairs Minister Abul Kalam Azad returns the ball as he inaugurates the Lotto Cup Open Table Tennis Competition at the Shaheed Tajuddin Wooden Floor Gymnasium in Pallta yesterday. PHOTO: STAR

NSC order paddlers sweating

SPORTS REPORTER

The Lotto Open Table Tennis competition got underway yesterday at the Wooden Floor Gymnasium through the singles event of unseeded players.

Some 165 players from 22 teams including ten English medium schools and two new teams -- Bangladesh Krira Shikkha Protisthan (BKSP) and a school from Bandarban called Quantum Shishu Kanon of Lama, are taking part in the four-day meet.

But the players from different schools, clubs and districts sweated much before taking part their respective events as the air-conditions were not used in the non-ventilated gymnasium following alleged directives from NSC officials despite the presence of Information and Cultural Affairs Minister Abul Kalam Azad as the chief guest.

BTF official Saidul Haque Sadi alleged that NSC director Abdur Rahman ordered the operator not to operate the air conditions though they made all air conditions functional in the morning.

He however could not explain the reasons behind the directives. On the opening day, Javed of DPC, Plaban and Mrittunjoy of BKSP, Tahsin, Rasik Ayam and Rakin of Sunny Dale, Omi of Siddique International and Paom Bom of Bandarban won their respective matches of the unseeded singles event.

A proud

FROM PAGE 16 international swimming competition.

Md. Golam Mostafa, joint secretary of the Bangladesh Swimming Federation and Sagor's coach explained that when Sagor's entry in the Olympics was confirmed, "We did not have enough time to arrange a foreign coach. We had talked with an Indian coach, but he could not come due to personal matters".

Whatever happens in the pools in London, it will be Mahfizur Rahman Sagor who is blessed with a privilege that all professional athletes dream off on 27 July when he carries our national flag into the newly built Olympic Stadium in East London.

May firm

FROM PAGE 16 BPL chairman Gazi Ashraf Hossain has also said that the franchises have also been asked to pay up the bidding money, which would amount to Tk 11 crore.

But as far as payments to the local players are concerned, the BPL has been lenient with the franchises, asking them to clear payments before Eid Ul Fitr.

India-bound

FROM PAGE 16 announce a captain for the team and it was learned that it would be made in "a day or two".

Meanwhile, Robiul Islam, Nasiruddin Faruque, Arafat Sunny and Mohammad Al-Amin have been named as the standbys.

Bopara recalled

Cricket

AFP, London

England recalled Ravi Bopara in a 13-man squad announced Sunday for the first Test against South Africa at The Oval starting on Thursday.

Now in line to bat at number six, the seam-bowling all-rounder was given a chance to add to his tally of 12 Test caps, the last won against India in August last year, also at The Oval, after impressing with 182 runs and four wickets in the 4-0 one-day series thrashing of Australia completed earlier this week.

Bopara had been set to be included for England's home Test series against the West Indies but the 27-year-old injured his thigh playing for county side Essex the day before the first Test squad was announced.

He was replaced by Jonathan Bairstow but the Yorkshire batsman struggled in his maiden Test series, scoring just 38 runs in three matches in a 2-0 win.

"Ravi Bopara has worked hard to regain his place in the Test squad following some injury concerns earlier in the season," national selector Geoff Miller said after the squad was announced.

England may be the world's top-ranked Test side but South Africa will replace them at the summit of the International Cricket Council rankings if they win this three-match series.

"We have played some very good cricket over the last couple of months in all formats to win series against the West Indies and Australia -- and preparations are now under way for what is sure to be a very competitive Test series against South Africa," the former England off-spinner added.

Miller, in a subsequent interview with BBC Radio, said England had high hopes for Bopara while insisting Bairstow's Test career was far from finished.

"We always hope for something big from all our players when we select them in the

England side and over the last few years they've produced on most occasions," Miller said.

"Yes, we would like to see something big from him, but he's only part of the side so he needs to actually perform to cement his place."

He added: "Jonny Bairstow obviously had a bit of a tough time, we know he's a young and a talented cricketer, that goes without saying, so he just needs to go back to Yorkshire and score some big runs and fight for his place."

England included seamers Graham Onions and Steven Finn, selected for the rain-marred drawn third Test against the West Indies at Edgbaston where first-choice new-ball duo James Anderson and Stuart Broad, also both included Sunday, were rested.

Now, with Anderson and Broad back, England must decide between Tim Bresnan, Onions and Finn for the remaining seam bowling spots should they stick with their policy of a four-man attack also including off-spinner Graeme Swann.

Both Bresnan and Swann have been struggling with elbow injuries lately.

But the lack of another specialist slow bowler in the squad suggests England are confident Swann will be fit to face the Proteas.

Meanwhile Kevin Pietersen, as expected, returned to the Test squad having missed the one-day series against both the West Indies and Australia following his retirement from limited overs internationals.

The star batsman warmed up for this latest clash with his native South Africa by scoring a superb double century for Surrey against county champions Lancashire this week.

SQUAD
Andrew Strauss (captain), Alastair Cook, Jonathan Trott, Kevin Pietersen, Ian Bell, Ravi Bopara, Matt Prior, Stuart Broad, Tim Bresnan, Graeme Swann, James Anderson, Steven Finn, Graham Onions.

Serena sails into final

Tennis

AFP, Stanford

Top seeded and defending champ Serena Williams destroyed Sorana Cirstea 6-1, 6-2 in one hour on Saturday to reach her second straight final at the WTA hardcourt tournament at Stanford.

The first all-American final on US soil since 2004 will feature top seed Williams against Californian Coco Vandeweghe, a lucky loser from qualifying who defeated fifth seed Yanina Wickmayer 6-2, 3-6, 6-2 to reach the first WTA final of her career.

Vandeweghe got into the main draw after a withdrawal and made the most of her opportunity, beating former world number one Jelena Jankovic in the second round.

Williams had a poor first serve percentage of 37 percent but did not waste time in crushing Cirstea to reach her second final in a week after winning Wimbledon seven days ago.

The Romanian was saddled with 31 unforced errors and got only one break point chance against Williams.

The 30-year-old Williams is poised to join sister Venus on 43 career trophies if she can win another title against her 120th-ranked opponent.

Williams played this week fighting jet-lag after flying over directly from Wimbledon eight time zones away.

Williams finished on her second match point after Cirstea saved a first winning chance a game earlier.

Vandeweghe, 21, and coached this week by her mother, will rise to around 75th as a result of her success here, according to the WTA Tour. She hammered a dozen aces and broke experienced Belgian Wickmayer four times in the match which lasted just over two hours.

At one tense moment Wickmayer drew a warning for swearing.

Vandeweghe said she was furious with herself when she crashed out of qualifying.

Vandeweghe's surprise showing this week by far surpassed her previous career bests: quarter-final appearances in her native San Diego and Tokyo two years ago and at Memphis in 2011.

She was the second lucky loser to advance to the WTA semi-finals this season after France's Mathilde Johansson in Fes, Morocco. The last one to reach a final was Hungarian Melinda Czink at Canberra five years ago.

The last all-American WTA final occurred eight years ago when Serena played her sister Venus at the year-end WTA Championships.

The top seed will have the massive experience edge when she takes on Vandeweghe.

Ferrer's fifth of the year

AFP, Bastad

In-form Spaniard and top seed David Ferrer won his fifth ATP title of the year here on Sunday beating compatriot Nicolas Almagro 6-2, 6-2.

Ferrer, 30 and winning his 16th career title in what was his 31st final, eased to the title against his 26-year-old opponent, who has yet to beat him in 10 meetings.

Ferrer, who was winning here for the second time having beaten Almagro in the 2007 final and was runner-up last year, took the first set by breaking his opponent, a two-time winner this season, for the second time.

Ferrer then rattled off the first three games of the second set before Almagro won his first game of the set - but the victor sealed the win after just 68 minutes when he broke Almagro again.

Ferrer is enjoying one of the best seasons of his career and this was his 51st win of a season that has seen him reach the French Open semi-finals and push Andy Murray hard in the Wimbledon quarterfinals.

KFC women's football

SPORTS REPORTER

Jessore and Thakurgaon emerged unbeaten champions in their respective venues to qualify for the finals of the KFC Women's Football Super League yesterday.

Jessore thrashed hosts Joypurhat 4-0 in their last match to qualify from the Joypur Stadium with Hena and Khaleda striking two goals each while Naogaon and Sirajganj played out a 1-1 draw at the same venue.

At the Nilfamari Stadium, Thakurgaon clinched the zonal title to move into the finals after beating Rangpur by 3-2 margin in a tiebreaker. The regulation time saw the game ending at a 1-1 draw. Bikis put Thakurgaon ahead in the 17th minute before Mitu cancelled the lead in the 33rd minute.

At the Bangladesh Agriculture University ground, Faridpur defeated Netrokona 1-0 with Mim scoring the decisive goal in the 45th minute while Khulna also defeated hosts BAU by identical margin with Dolon scoring the lone goal.

Narsingdi outplayed Manikganj 10-0 with Afrin and Rima slotting hattricks at the Birshrestha Shaheed Mostafa Kamal Stadium in Kamalapur. Gopalganj defeated Bangladesh Police 1-0, thanks to Shilpi's goal.

Sunamganj and Patuakhali played out a goalless draw at the Sylhet Stadium while Narayanganj overwhelmed Habiganj 13-0 riding on hattricks from Mithila and Anjumara.

Narail beat Magura 2-0 at the Kushtia Stadium.

Rain mars SA Test preps

AFP, London

South Africa's preparations for next week's first Test against England suffered a setback on Saturday after rain washed out play in their tour match against Kent.

The Proteas were restricted to just 90 minutes of batting before a downpour washed out the middle day of their final warm-up match at Canterbury with the tourists on 108 for two.

South Africa's assistant coach Russell Domingo brushed off concerns his side might suffer from a lack of match practice.

"I reckon if we were here for a month we'd still struggle to get in a lot of preparation," he said, referring to the wet weather.

"I'm not worried. We had such a good week of preparation in Switzerland - the guys were almost saying 'we're mentally ready to play already'."

"Whether we practised with 10 games, or three games or two games, I don't think it would make too much difference - because the guys are mentally ready. They're fired up to go and do this."

Windies clinch series

Taylor ton goes in vain

Cricket

AFP, Basseterre

New Zealand skipper Ross Taylor smashed a fine century but it was not enough to prevent West Indies wrapping up the one-day series with a 24-run win in Saturday's fourth match.

Taylor, playing in his first match of the series after injuring his shoulder in an earlier Twenty20 international between the two sides in Florida last month, made 110 off 115 balls.

It was an innings which included six boundaries and five sixes for his sixth one-day century.

But as his team chased a 267 target, he was outshone by West Indies seamer Tino Best who marked his recall to the team with 4-46, a performance which included the wickets of Taylor and the dangerous Jacob Oram.

Earlier, Kieron Pollard hit a patient half-century as West Indies recovered from 105-5 to make 264 all out.

Pollard top-scored with 56, Marlon Samuels made 46 while the recalled Devon Thomas hit a useful 37.

Victory gave West Indies an unassailable 3-1 lead in the series which concludes with the fifth and final match at Warner Park on Monday.

"It's a good feeling indeed,"

said West Indies skipper Daren Sammy.

"The good thing for us today was that the lower order came through. New Zealand improved as the series went on, but it was good to see we kept our cool."

West Indies off-spinner Sunil Narine, who took 2-20 and was named man of the match and he won rich praise from Taylor.

"You have got to give credit to West Indies," said Taylor. "They were under pressure. We would have liked to put the foot down on the throat, but we didn't execute well."

"You have got to back yourself to get 79 off the last 10, but you have to give credit to Narine."

West Indies were helped by an untidy performance in the field by New Zealand whose bowlers sent down 20 wickets.

The home side lost Johnson Charles (1), Chris Gayle (16) and Dwayne Smith (0) by the seventh over with their team on 20.

After Dwayne Bravo had gone for just 18, Samuels and Pollard added 46 for the fifth wicket before Pollard and Samuels put the West Indies back on the road to recovery with a partnership of 85.

Thomas hit three fours and a six in his 43-ball stay while Pollard smashed five boundaries and a six off 70 deliveries.

Sammy (26) and Andre Russell (29 with two big sixes) added valuable late runs.

SCORES IN BRIEF

WEST INDIES: 264 (Samuels 46, Pollard 56, Thomas 37, Sammy 26, Russell 29; Southee 3-53, Oram 3-42)

NEW ZEALAND: 240 (Nicol 35, Taylor 110, Latham 32; Best 4-46, Narine 2-20)

Result: West Indies won by 24 runs and lead five-match series 3-1.

Man-of-the-match: Sunil Narine.



An action from yesterday's KFC Women's Football Super League match between Narsingdi and Manikganj at the Birshrestha Shaheed Mostafa Kamal Stadium in Kamalapur. PHOTO: STAR

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

- ACROSS**
1 Taj Mahal city
5 Lunch order, for short
8 "Bye"
12 Bellow
13 Kanga's kid
14 Change for a five
15 Always playing the same role
17 Beehive State
18 Perched
19 Illuminated
20 With aloofness
21 Light brown
22 "Go, team!"
23 Underneath
26 Flip-flops
30 Sultor
31 Solemn promise
32 Mayberry moppet
- 33** Used a stopwatch on
35 Chirping sound
36 Whammy
37 Inmate
38 Devoutness
41 Supporting
42 Clear the tables
45 Vortex
46 Sad
48 Show sadness
49 Anger
50 Do as you're told
51 Logical
52 A piece
- 53** Test the waters
20 Author Fleming
21 Not hunt-and-peck
22 Uncooked
23 English channel?
24 Moray, e.g.
25 Thai neighbor
26 Turf
27 Gorilla
28 Whopper
29 Congealed
31 Annoy
34 Crucial
35 Un-decided
37 Cringe in fear
38 Church furniture
39 Concept
40 Paradise
41 Links warning
42 Ali ---
43 Second-hand
44 Eyelid woe
46 Party bowful
47 Intimidate
- DOWN**
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3 En-grossed
4 "All the Things You ----"
5 Gray matter
6 Missing
7 Youngster
8 Six-pointer
9 Opposed to
10 Blue hue
11 Wan
16 Talon

Solution time: 21 mins.



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CRYPTOQUIP

YIDIN-QPK ZDLN WQUL VCXEC
HSDONQY EDK VXK CPZN
DLUPKIY UW NDQICNKYDQN:
D HUIINQO SUIINQO.

Yesterday's Cryptoquip: WHEN CUSTOMERS MAKE CALLS AT A SANDWICH SHOP, I THINK THEY SHOULD PROBABLY USE THE DELI-PHONE.
Today's Cryptoquip Clue: U equals O