

Star SPORT



Dominican Republic's Felix Sanchez sets off the blocks on his way to winning what was an emotional men's 400m hurdles gold at the Olympic Stadium in London on Monday. PHOTO: AFP

Holly vaults into matrimony

British pole vaulter Holly Bleasdale flopped at the Olympics, but was a winner in love on Tuesday when she revealed her boyfriend had proposed to her.

The 20-year-old Bleasdale, who finished sixth in the final, tweeted that boyfriend Paul Bradshaw had asked her to marry him.

"6th in the Olympics and @bradshaaw proposes to me :) epic day!!!" she wrote on Twitter.

Bradshaw had posted: "I have just proposed to @HollyBleasdale and she said yes!!!! Best day ever!"



Amer lets cat out of the bag

Football

SPORTS REPORTER

When the professional league committee of the Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) was announcing the 'not-guilty' verdict in the prolonged match-fixing investigation into clubs Brothers Union and Rahmatganj MFS, a new and darker revelation emerged as Brothers Union manager Amer Khan declared on TV that he was forced to play a fixed match against eventual champions Abahani.



AMER KHAN

Amer claimed in an interview given to satellite television Ekattor TV on Sunday, aired yesterday, that his side had deliberately lost against Abahani on May 26, 2012 as he was told to do so by an influential member of the club on request from Abahani.

Without naming names and alluding to the investigation against the Rahmatganj-Brothers match which took place on April 26 this year, Amer said, "Everyone has their fingers raised against a relegation-threatened club, but no one dares to do so against the champions," Amer said, pointing the finger at the Abahani-Brothers match. "Is it too difficult to understand how we lost 2-4 against Abahani when they were playing with 10 men? We had to do so because there were specific instructions given to us to lose. When an influential political leader tells you to throw away the match, what else could you do?"

Amer could not have been any more blatant in his accusations as he said that it was on the request of some influential person from the Abahani club that the instruction was relayed to him.

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U-19s win first warm-up

Cricket

SPORTS REPORTER

Right-arm paceman Abu Jayed combined with left-arm spinner Nasum Ahmed to give the Bangladesh Under-19s a convincing seven-wicket victory over Scotland in their first official warm-up match of the ICC U19 Cricket World Cup at the University No 2 Oval in Brisbane yesterday.

Jayed shattered the Scottish top order by taking three wickets and after that Nasum grabbed four wickets to finish the job as Scotland were bundled out for 106 in 37.5 overs. Another new ball bowler Abu Haider might not have been successful in terms of wicket taken but he was very economical, conceding nine runs in his seven-over spell.

In chase of the paltry total, Bangladesh also lost an early wicket as Soumya Sarker was dismissed off the very third ball but they recovered from the early jolt to reach the target for the loss of only three wickets with 179 balls remaining.

Captain Anamul Haque played a brisk knock of 34 off 33 deliveries with the help of four boundaries and a six while Salman Hossain hit an unbeaten 37 off 45 balls that contained five fours.

The easy win made skipper Anamul happy but he was looking forward to today's last official warm-up match against South Africa to be held at the Kev Hackney Oval, Sunshine Coast.

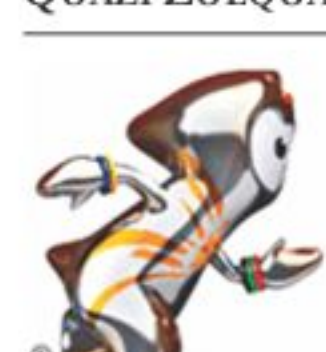
"We wanted to get the runs quickly as it was a good batting wicket. The win made us very happy and we will look to play well tomorrow against South Africa," said Anamul after the match.

To acclimatise to the Australian conditions Bangladesh -- who have been placed in Group D along with Sri Lanka, South

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A gold for grandma

QUAZI ZULQUARNAIN ISLAM, from London



On the podium Felix Sanchez cried and cried. As the national anthem of his beloved Dominican Republic rung out across the stadium speakers, Sanchez wept uncontrollably. Despite his gold medal, they hardly looked like tears of joy to anyone watching.

It could yet become one of the most enduring images of London 2012.

Sanchez had just won his second Olympic gold. The first had come

in Athens in 2004 as a youngster and the second as a written-off 34-year old.

But that was not why the tears came.

Four years ago in Beijing, Sanchez was at the top of his game, regarded as the best 400-meters hurdler in the world. But he woke up on the morning of his preliminary heat to the news that his grandmother had died.

Sanchez thought about dropping out but decided to run, and he wound up with the 22nd-fastest time of 25 finishers.

"I ran terribly. I cried the whole day. I was very emotional," he recalled. "After that Olympics, I made a promise that I was going to win a medal for her."

And so he has.

Sanchez ran with a photo of his grandmother taped to the inside of his bib, close to his heart. His spikes bore the inscription, "Abuela", Spanish for Grandmother.

And when he crossed the finish line he bent to his knees, pulled out the picture, put it on the track and kissed the photo of the woman who had raised him.

Victory though, was hardly a foregone conclusion.

"I went out probably too hard. ... I came off the 10th hurdle and I was very tired. And for about three or four strides -- about 5 meters -- I was just waiting for someone to pass me. But then about 10, 15 meters to the line, I knew at that point no one was going to pass me," said Sanchez.

"And then it got surreal, and I was just overwhelmed with emotion."

Those emotions manifested itself in the tears on the podium and Sanchez explained that it was the rain that had bought them on.

"Ironically, it started raining. It just made me feel like my grandmother was crying tears of joy," Sanchez explained at his news conference, choking up. "She was proud of me."

Sanchez's victory is all the more remarkable since he became the oldest man to win an Olympic medal in a race of 400-meters or less. These are distances normally dominated by younger men, but the veteran Sanchez, who had dominated the sport for so long, proved that a final swansong is not beyond great champions.

"When you dominate a sport for so long, you don't want to come back in and settle for second best," said Sanchez.

He certainly didn't. And on the way, he had the memory of his grandmother to help him along.

A Grenadian's tale

QUAZI ZULQUARNAIN ISLAM from London



One of the more poignant moments of Sunday's electric track-and-field lineup in the Olympic Stadium came in the semifinals of the 400 meters. Oscar Pistorius, who

had managed to reach his goal and qualify for the semi-final, finished last. There were cheers for Pistorius though, from around the stadium. But more importantly, the young sprinter who had led the field came over to the South African and exchanged numbers.

That young man was Kirani James, and on Monday, the native of Grenada provided a more ample reason for the world to remember him. He won the Caribbean island's first medal. And it was gold.

James dominated the 400-meter field with a run of such startling proportions that experts were already likening him to the legendary Michael Johnson. The soft-spoken James, though was quick to dismiss such comparisons.

"Obviously he's (Johnson's) been a huge thing for our sport and our event. Obviously everyone wants to reach that level and some point," he said.

"But I'm just focused on the best that I can be and don't try to be like Michael Johnson because if I try to do that, every time I fail is going to be a disappointment for me and a disappointment for everyone."

James lacks the outward sparkle of an Usain Bolt or the bullish demeanor of a Justin Gatlin. He does not possess the evoca-

tive nature of Felix Sanchez, but he is an athlete who has long been touted as the next big thing of 400 meter running. That he hails from Grenada makes this fact all the more remarkable.

Until Monday, Grenada had never had an Olympic medalist in any event. But the 19-year old nicknamed the Jaguar emphatically crushed the suspense out of one of the sport's toughest races and crossed the finish line in 43.94 seconds. He also became the first non-US athlete to break the 44-second barrier.

James was born in a small fishing village in Grenada to a father who is a labourer. His village is called Gouyave, a name given by the French, because of the abundance of guava trees. Now though, Caribbeans call it the village that never sleeps.

"I suspect there are giant street parties going on," said James. "In my community that is how we celebrate success."

For the 100,000 or so people who make up population of Grenada, James' gold medal is the highest honour.

"Just being here and being an Olympic gold medalist is a huge step for our country in terms of just stepping up to the plate in track and field and going out and putting us on the map," he added.

The gold medal and hopes of a future in which he might one day break the record of Michael Johnson should spur the teenager on to greater things. But despite the gold his classy gesture with Pistorius will probably endure in the collective memory a little while longer.

"It was just spur of the moment," said James.

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Grenada's Kirani James is draped in his national flag as he celebrates his victory in the men's 400m final at the Olympic Stadium in London on Monday. PHOTO: AFP

BFF finds 'em not guilty

Football

SPORTS REPORTER

The two-and-a-half-month long investigation into the allegedly fixed match between Brothers Union and Rahmatganj MFS failed to find any incriminating evidence, it was revealed at a press conference at the Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) House yesterday.

"The Fixed Match Identification Committee, on the evidence of newspaper reports, video footage and expert's opinion, felt that the match was below the usual standard of the league. However, the fact that they did not have enough incriminating evidence like pre-match information or other evidence which might suggest that this was definitely a fixed-match, the committee felt that the evidence they had was not enough to prove the allegation," said chairman of

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MEDALLIST

COUNTRY	GOLD	SILVER	BRONZE
China	33	20	16
United States	29	15	20
Great Britain	20	12	12
Russia	8	17	18
Japan	2	12	14
France	8	9	10
Germany	5	13	7
South Korea	11	5	6
Australia	2	12	8
Italy	7	6	4
Netherlands	5	3	5
Canada	1	3	6
Ukraine	3	0	6
Hungary	4	1	3
Belarus	3	2	3
New Zealand	3	1	4
Denmark	2	4	2
Romania	2	4	2
Brazil	2	1	5
Poland	2	1	5
Kazakhstan	6	0	1
Cuba	3	3	1
Spain	1	4	1