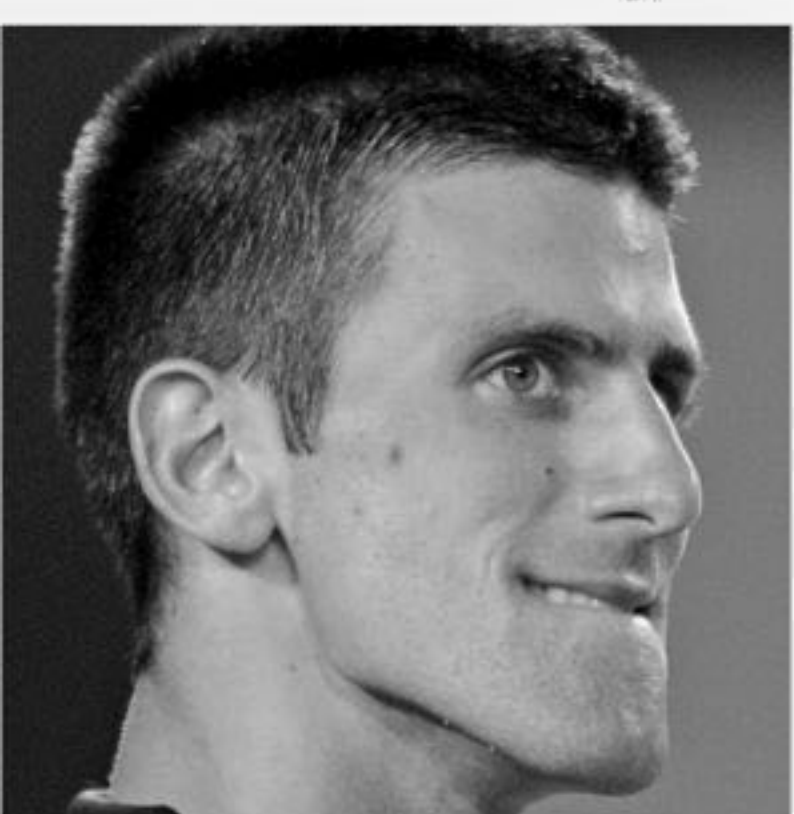


Djokovic eyes record

Meets Murray in final today



NOVAK DJOKOVIC

AP, Melbourne



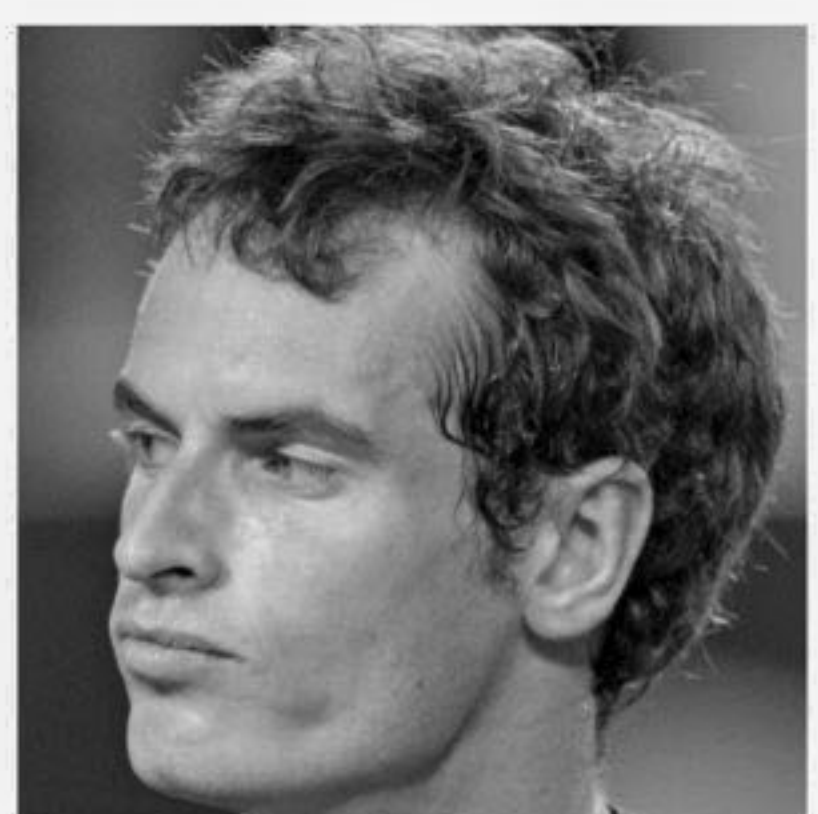
Novak Djokovic remembers when he was about 11 and meeting a boy his age named Andy Murray.

The young Murray from Dunblane, Scotland, was "quite pale," recalled the Serbian, known as "The Joker" for his wisecracks.

Back then, they were playing on the juniors' circuit "just trying to play tennis and enjoy the game," Djokovic said. Little did either know that later in life they would keep running into each other on tennis's biggest stages.

On Sunday, Djokovic and Murray meet for their third Grand Slam final

HEAD TO HEAD table with columns for Djokovic and Murray, listing statistics like Total wins, Last five matches, On hard courts, In Grand Slams, At Australian Open, In finals, and Career titles.



ANDY MURRAY

at the Australian Open. It is the latest rematch in a rivalry that Djokovic describes as unique because they've known each other since childhood.

The Serbian world number one Djokovic defeated Spaniard David Ferrer 6-2, 6-2, 6-1 on Thursday. Murray downed Swiss world number two Roger Federer in five sets -- 6-4, 6-7 (5/7), 6-3, 6-7 (2/7), 6-2 -- to reach the final on Friday.

"It's nice to see somebody that you grew up with doing so well," the 25-year-old Serbian player said Saturday. "We know each other since we were 11/12 years old. I guess that adds something special to our rivalry."

Djokovic rose to stardom first,

winning the 2008 Australian Open at the age of 20. Now, the No. 1-ranked player owns five Grand Slam trophies and is aiming to be the first man in the Open era to win three in a row at Melbourne.

The third-ranked Murray is the latest addition to the so-called Big Four of men's tennis, which also includes No. 2 Roger Federer and 11-time Grand Slam winner Rafael Nadal. The group has combined to win 33 of the last 34 Grand Slams.

Murray is striving for his second Grand Slam title after winning at the US Open, where he beat Djokovic in the final to end a 76-year drought for British men at the majors.

Royals get WI boost

SPORTS REPORTER

Three West Indies cricketers -- Shivnarine Chanderpaul, Dwayne Smith and Sulieman Benn -- joined Sylhet Royals on Friday to play in the ongoing Bangladesh Premier League (BPL).

The other foreign recruits of Sylhet Royals, who are leading the table with four wins in as many matches, are Hamilton Masakadza, Paul Stirling, Elton Chigumbura, Mohammad Nabi and Dirk Nannes.

Sylhet Royals coach Mohammad Salahuddin said the arrival of the three Caribbean cricketers further boost their side.

U-18 cricket

SPORTS REPORTER

Ijaz Ahmed claimed five wickets as Sylhet Division posted an eight-wicket victory over Dhaka North on the third and final day of the Young Tigers U18 National Cricket Competition at the Dinajpur Stadium yesterday.

SCORES IN BRIEF

BKSP: First Innings 209 all out in 73.4 overs and Second Innings 153-4 in 47 overs (Moniruzzaman 44, Rafsan 40; Gazi 2-43). BARISAL: First Innings 203 all out in 88 overs (Al Saif 77, Panna 39; Sayeed 3-43) and Second Innings 9-0 in 5.2 overs.

Result: Match Drawn DHAKA NORTH: First Innings 85 all out in 42 overs and Second Innings 95 all out in 54.3 overs (Pritom 21, Ijaz 5-26, Mominul 1-19).

SYLHET: First Innings 163 all out in 72.3 overs (Mominul 51; Mehedi 3-15, Arman 3-32) and Second Innings 20-2. Result: Sylhet Division won by eight wickets.

DHAKA DIV SOUTH: First Innings 345-6 in 90 overs.

DHAKA METRO: First Innings 174 all out in 84.2 overs (Wazib 69, Maruf 37; Koli 4-47, Saif 2-18) and Second Innings 246 all out in 135.5 overs (Manik 68, Zubayer 60; Koli 3-62, Saif 2-48). Result: Match Drawn.

CHITTAGONG: First Innings 264 all out in 87 overs and Second Innings 150 all out in 67.3 overs (Suman 41; Nabi 5-24). RANGPUR: First Innings 207 all out in 81.1 overs (Tanveer 54, Shajol 39; Tanjid 3-33, Faruk 3-61) and Second Innings 105-4 in 41 overs (Rashid 49 not out). Result: Match Drawn.

SL take T20 lead



AFP, Sydney

Sri Lanka downed Australia by five wickets to win the opening T20 international at the Sydney Olympic Stadium on Saturday.

Two towering sixes on consecutive balls from Sri Lanka's Thisara Perera sealed a comfortable win for the visitors, who have now beaten Australia in their last four T20s.

The win was set up by some superb bowling from Sri Lankan pair Lasith Malinga and Nuwan Kulasekara, who earlier restricted the Australians to 137-3 from their 20 overs.

The Sri Lankans reached the target with seven balls to spare and are now guaranteed of retaining their number one ranking regardless of what happens in the second and final match in Melbourne on Monday.

Australia earlier won the toss and chose to bat, but apart from big-hitting opener David Warner they found scoring difficult.

The Sri Lankans always had the target well in hand, once openers Kusal Perera (33) and Tillakaratne Dilshan (16) put on 46 runs in 38 balls for the opening wicket.

SCORES IN BRIEF

AUSTRALIA: 137 for 3 in 20 overs (Warner 90 not out, Voges 25 not out; Kulasekara 1-21, Perera 1-29)

SRI LANKA: 139 for 5 in 18.5 overs (K Perera 33, Dilshan 16; Matthews 35 not out, Thirimanne 20, T Perera not out 19; Doherty 2-21, Maxwell 2-15)

Result: Sri Lanka won by five wickets. Player-of-the-match: David Warner.

Revolt in MSC

FROM PAGE 16

Bhuiyan felt that this incident was part of a bigger conspiracy and that the non-payment was justified under the circumstances.

"Yes, we have withheld one month's salary as there is an investigation going on the club's astonishing 4-1 defeat at Muktiyoddha Sangsad on January 5. We served a show cause notice to 14 players who took part in the match," said Bhuiyan. "The defeat against Muktis was unacceptable. How can a team that beats Sheikh Russel 3-1 lose against Muktiyoddha like that? We formed an investigation team to find out the cause of the debacle and we will take a decision about the payment and at the same time whether to take action against players for the loss, once we get the investigation report."

It may be mentioned here that this is not the first instance of allegations of unpaid wages against the traditional outfit. Last year the Black and Whites' Nigerian coach Emeka Euzego accused the club of not paying huge amounts of salaries, plane fare and bonuses.

The Motijheel outfit are currently lying in fifth position on the league table.

Victorious Azarenka

FROM PAGE 16

quarterfinals, will become the new No. 2 in the rankings.

On a crisp Saturday night, Azarenka won the coin toss and elected to receive, a ploy that seemed to work when a nervous Li was broken to start the match. After a double fault on the first point, Li's forehand long gave Azarenka the early lead.

The capacity crowd at Rod Laver Arena was firmly behind Li, cheering loudly when she was introduced. Azarenka, meanwhile, had her errors applauded, and one spectator even mocked the loud hooting sound she makes when she hits a shot.

The chill from the crowd was a remnant of Azarenka's semifinal win over American teenager Sloane Stephens, when Azarenka was criticised for taking a questionable 10-minute medical timeout near the end of the match.

In the second set, a few fans heckled Azarenka over the incident. One man yelled, "Take a deep breath, Vicky."

By the end of the match, she appeared to have won some of the fans back. Azarenka's friend, rapper Redfoo, yelled down to her from the player box "You deserve it," and she later blew kisses to the crowd. Someone else in the crowd shouted "Victoria, we love you."

Mass exodus from KDSA

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

A total of 14 office bearers out of 22 resigned from Khulna District Sports Association's (KDSA) executive committee yesterday in protest of misuse of power by general secretary Kazi Shamim Ahsan.

Vice-president Sheikh Aslam Hossain, assistant general secretary Asaduzzaman Murad, assistant secretary Ekramul Kabir Milton, treasurer Yousuf Ali and members Kazi Nasimul Hasan Sanu, Afzalur Rahman, Adiluzzaman, Tariqul Islam Choton, Molla Khairul Alam, Ahmedul Kabir Chaineese, Aziza Khanam Eliza and Selima Aziz tendered their resignations to KDSA president and deputy commissioner of Khulna, Mesbahuddin.

They demanded a fresh election schedule during a press conference at the Khulna Press Club auditorium after forming an interim committee and preparing a fair voter list. Mesbahuddin said that necessary steps will be taken soon as per the constitution.

Kazi Shamim Ahsan however said that all the allegations against him are false, baseless and fabricated.

Independence Cup from March 10

SPORTS REPORTER

The Independence Day Cup football tournament, comprising 12 teams, will be staged from March 10 to 26 at the Bangabandhu National Stadium.

The decision was taken at the professional league committee meeting of the Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) on Saturday. Apart from the nine teams from the Premier League, three teams will be chosen from a qualifying round where Championship League clubs, services and university teams will participate.

Meanwhile, Premier Bank has been retained as the sponsors for the second tier professional league -- the Championship League which may be deferred a few days from its initially scheduled opening of February 4, it was informed.

Sylhet, Khulna keep winning

SPORTS REPORTER from Khulna



Khulna Royal Bengals won their second consecutive match on Friday as they beat the Rangpur Riders by 9 runs at the Sheikh Abu Naser Stadium in Khulna, while the Dhaka Gladiators succumbed to their first defeat, by seven wickets, of the Bangladesh Premier League (BPL) T20 to Sylhet Royals, who remain the only unbeaten team.

Batting first in front of a packed stadium, the Riders revived midway after a slow start to score a defendable total of 150. They rode on their skipper Shahriar Nafees, who followed his century in the previous game with a well-composed 53.

In reply, the Rangpur batsmen struggled against Khulna's pacers. Afghanistan's left-arm pacer Shapoor Zadran was the chief destroyer as he finished with figures of three for 21 in his four overs. Nasir Hossain was the only bright spot for the Riders as he almost single-handedly took the team home with 70 off 49, an innings that witnessed two sixes and seven fours. Despite Nasir's brilliant innings, Rangpur were restricted to 141 for 7.

In the day's earlier game, reigning champions Dhaka Gladiators were unable to stop Sylhet Royals from easily overhauling a competitive target of 153.

The Royals were steered to victory thanks to an unbeaten 75 by skipper Mushfiqur Rahim who stayed their till the end to see his side through. His innings, during which he hit three fours and four sixes, was a mixture of both aggression and calmness.

The captain was first involved in a 79-run third-wicket stand with Mominul Haque. The fall of Mominul brought Nazmul Milon to the crease and he scored a fiery 25 off 17 in an unbeaten 55-run partnership with Mushfiqur for the fourth wicket. The game finished in style as Milon smacked Shakib Al Hasan for a six in the penultimate over.

Earlier, the Gladiators failed to make the most of their strong batting order as apart from Mohammad Ashraful and Anamul Haque, only Darren Stevens scored more than 15. Mohammad Nabi and Dirk Nannes took two wickets each.

SCORES IN BRIEF DHAKA GLADIATORS: 152 for 8 (Ashraful 38; Nannes 2-27).

SYLHET ROYALS: 157 for 3 (Mushfiqur 75 not out; Alfonso Thomas 2-27)

Result: Sylhet Royals won by seven wickets.

KHULNA ROYAL BENGALS: 150 for 7 (Nafees 53; Sharif 3-22). RANGPUR ROYALS: 141 for 7 (Nasir 70 not out ; Zadran 3-21).

Result: Khulna Royal Bengals won by 9 runs.



Sylhet Royals skipper Mushfiqur Rahim (L) is embraced by teammate Nazmul Hossain Milon after the duo led the team to a 7-wicket victory over Dhaka Gladiators in the BPL T20 match in Khulna on Friday.

PHOTO: STAR

Khulna turned the tide?

FROM PAGE 16

notch with the matches getting more competitive. Added to that were the brilliant catches -- most brilliant of those was Tapos Ghosh's phenomenal diving effort in Khulna's first match against Chittagong -- which eclipsed the poor fielding standards of the inaugural edition of the competition last year.

While there were no doubts with regard to the standard of the game on the field, some of the arrangements of the field, like providing certain teams with adequate accommodation, were questionable. One of the hotels, for instance, struggled to provide the players with hot water!

With the competition shifting towards Chittagong, it would not be wrong to state that Khulna has witnessed one of the more competitive stages of the tournament. It may have taken a little battering in its attempt to accommodate over 120 cricketers and other team members in the city for the first time, but there's no doubt that the ending it provided to its BPL adventure is bound to bring the sport back to the cricket-loving city in the near future.

Banglalink win corporate badminton

SPORTS REPORTER

Banglalink emerged champions in the 1st Ispahani Corporate Badminton Grand Slam which concluded yesterday at the Shaheed Tajuddin Ahmed Indoor Stadium. Airtel finished runners-up in the team event of the meet.

Meer Mohammad Mohsin of Banglalink won triple crown in the meet clinching the men's singles, men's doubles and mixed doubles titles.

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

- ACROSS 1 Gym-nast's surface 4 Expert 7 Pops 12 Brewery output 13 Sleep phenom 14 Unmoving 15 Rotating part 16 Reason to call 18 Pump up the volume 19 Heathen 20 Lumber 22 Run-down horse 23 Blue hue 27 Toss in 29 Political refugee 31 Groan-inducing, maybe 34 Take as one's own 35 Over-acted 37 Lingerie item 38 Church section 39 — Khan 41 Tradition-al tales 45 Pilfered surface 47 Chum 48 Too thin 52 Storm center 53 Automaton 54 A Kennedy song 55 Sinbad's bird 56 Lessen 57 One or more 58 Pismire 25 Dada artist 26 Say it's OK 28 Easter buy 30 Scratch 31 Shell game item 32 Diamond arbiter 33 Phone bk info 36 Facts 37 Whale-bone 40 Must, jocularly 42 Met performance 43 Silk alternative 44 Vote for 45 Locale 46 Vortex 48 Mound 49 Unruly bunch 50 Lawyers' org. 51 Bar-racks bed

Solution time: 25 mins.

Crossword grid with letters filled in for the solution.

Cryptogram grid with letters filled in.

CRYPTOQUIP

I L J B M X V P J C C J C I L N V J M B O H Z X S K J F L N V V L J C M X S M V B N E L V Y B J I Y Z K O V L N B S V L J F E Y H J V V F - H F J .

Yesterday's Cryptoquip: SHRIEK THAT WOULD LIKELY BE EMITTED IF A GUY WERE TO NICK HIS FACE VERY BADLY: SHAVING SCREAM.

Today's Cryptoquip Clue: M equals A