

2nd win for Agrani Bank

SPORTS REPORTER

Agrani Bank SC posted their second victory in the Premier Bank Bangladesh Championship League when they recorded a 2-1 win over Dhaka United Club at the Birshreshtha Shaheed Mostafa Kamal Stadium yesterday.

Hizzatul Milon put Agrani Bank ahead in the third minute before doubling the lead in the 66th minute. Matior Rahman pulled one goal back for Dhaka United, who slipped to the bottom of the eight-team table with four points from six matches.

Agrani Bank, on the other hand, leapfrogged to the fifth position from the bottom with seven points from six matches.

Zia wins again

SPORTS REPORTER

Grand Master Zaiur Rahman returned to winning ways in the 15th Dubai Open Chess Championship when he beat Sudan's Mohammed Tarig Elther in the third round held in Dubai, UAE on Tuesday.

The win put Zia on joint second-position along with 21 players with 2.5 points from three matches. Zia was scheduled to play his fourth-round board against Armenian GM Petrosian Tigran on Wednesday night.

BD women

FROM PAGE 16

overs to reach 66, by which time they had lost openers Shukhtara Rahman and Farzana Haque. The only partnership of note was for the third wicket between Rumana and Lata Mondol, who stitched together 76 runs in 15 overs. But when Rumana, who hit eight boundaries in her 111-ball innings, was bowled by Ekta Bisht it sounded the death knell for the tourists. Thereafter the innings, despite captain Salma's 39-ball 35, lost impetus and the regular fall of wickets saw Bangladesh stutter to 210 for nine.

Ekta Bisht inflicted the major damage, taking three for 34 from ten overs.

The win gave India the 3-match series 2-0, making the last ODI on April 12 a dead rubber.

SCORES IN BRIEF

INDIA: 256 for 9 (Kaur 103, Raut 80, Mandhana 25; Jahanara 2-38, Salma 2-48, Panna 1-39)

BANGLADESH: 210 for 9 (Rumana 75, Salma 35, Lata28; Bisht3-34, Kaur2-30)

Result: India won by 46 runs.

Sri Lanka

FROM PAGE 16

and Hashan Dumindu laid the foundation in 77-run opening stand.

Leg-spinner Jubair Hossain was the most successful bowler, taking three wickets for 117 runs while Mehedy Hasan took two for 39.

Teletalk

FROM PAGE 16

requested Teletalk authorities to come forward to sponsor domestic cricket competitions.

Teletalk managing director Mujibur Rahman also spoke on the occasion.

Dutch coaches

FROM PAGE 16

professional football league committee on Tuesday decided to start the money-spinning tournament in the middle of May with eight clubs of Bangladesh Premier League.



PHOTO: STAR

Post and Telecommunications Minister Sahara Khatun (2nd from L) displays one of three trophies during the title sponsor launching ceremony of Bangladesh-Zimbabwe series at a local hotel yesterday. State-run mobile phone operator Teletalk is the title sponsor of the series that starts in Harare with the first Test on April 17.

Wisden batting on 150



AFP, London

It started as a work of a former cricketer looking to secure an income in his retirement and was priced at a modest one shilling.

By contrast, Wednesday saw the publication of the 150th edition of Wisden Cricketers' Almanack, with the hardback edition a somewhat more expensive 50 pounds.

In the intervening years the publication founded by John Wisden -- an English professional bowler known for his "fast and ripping off-cutters" -- has established itself as the "bible of cricket".

Published every year since 1864 -- not even two world wars interrupted the unbroken sequence -- the appearance of the annual, primarily a review of the previous year's English cricket season but now encompassing the global cricket calendar, has become a landmark event among the game's enthusiasts.

That first edition was a 112-page work, in contrast to the some 1,500 pages needed to encompass the modern game, and included such random details as the lengths of Britain's canals.

Also there were the dates of the Wars of the Roses -- a series of dynastic wars fought for the English crown in the 15th century -- and the rules of an ancient pub game called Knur and Spell.

Woods issues major caution



AFP, Augusta

Tiger Woods, favoured to win this week's 77th Masters and take his first major title since 2008, says he would have won a couple more Masters crowns the past few years had he putted better.

World No. 1 Woods, a 14-time major champion chasing the all-time record of 18 major titles won by Jack Nicklaus, has not won the Masters since taking his fourth in 2005 and has not won any major since the 2008 US Open.

But Woods has won three times this year, his 77 career titles only five shy of Sam Snead's all-time record, and has displayed clutch putting skill in triumphs at Torrey Pines and last month at Doral and Bay Hill.

"I feel comfortable with every aspect of my game," Woods said. "I feel that I've improved and I've got more consistent and I think the wins show that."

Russel inch closer to title

FROM PAGE 16

forwards failed to cash in on those chances. Sheikh Russel's shaky backline somehow survived the late onslaught to ensure three crucial points.

Meanwhile, in the first match of the day, Mohammedan SC defeated Muktiyoddha Sangsad 1-0, thanks to a late strike from Mezbabul Haque Manik. The win took Mohammedan's tally to 24 points from 15 matches as they consolidated their position at fourth.

Mohammedan came into the match with a bitter memory of a 4-1 drubbing at the hands of Muktiyoddha Sangsad in the first leg in Gopalganj. Mohammedan exacted the revenge with a slim-margin win, but they hardly dominated a side which has been trouble-hit of late, as the Muktiyoddha players went on strike in demand of unpaid wages before returning to the training session just two days before the match.

The Black and Whites though held the upperhand and yielded a few scoring chances but Ghanaian hitman Osei Morison squandered at least three of those chances.

But Morison finally redeemed himself in the 62nd minute when he played a neat cut-back to Manik, who coolly tapped in between two Muktiyoddha defenders to score the winning goal.

But over time features that have become staples made their first appearance, with 1889 marking the debut of the Almanack's Cricketers of the Year -- a highly prized award which a player can win only once in their career.

Recipients have ranged from giants of the game in the 19th and early 20th centuries such as W.G. Grace and Jack Hobbs to modern-day greats from Viv Richards and Ian Botham to current England skipper Alastair Cook and Indian legend Sachin Tendulkar.

"It was an honour to be named one of the Wisden Cricketers of the Year in 1993 because you feel like you are being recognised by one of the game's great institutions," former England captain Alec Stewart told the BBC.

The reference work's familiar yellow cover made its debut with the 1938 edition, as did the woodcut image by artist Eric Ravilious of two Victorian-era gentlemen playing cricket, which has since become Wisden's emblem.

Having outlived some early rivals, Wisden established a pre-eminent place in cricket publishing.

But in an age when cricket statistics and comment are just a mouse-click away and the Internet provides a constantly updated supply of information, how will Wisden, having reached a well-known cricketing landmark "score" of 150, press on to its double century?

Pak hunt for quicks launched

AFP, Lahore

Pakistan Wednesday launched a hunt for fast bowlers to overcome a shortage of quality pacemen in the country once known for its production line of quicks.

Under the "King of Speed" programme, the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) will seek out bowlers who can hit 145 kph (90 mph) for a special training camp with legendary left-armer Wasim Akram.

Wasim and pace partner Waqar Younis formed one of the deadliest pairings in international cricket and furthered the art mastered by their illustrious mentor and captain Imran Khan in the 1970s and 80s.

Speed king Shoaib Akhtar and Mohammad Sami dominated the scene in 1990s and 2000s and both attained speeds of over 100 mph in international matches.

But the lack of quality pace bowlers has been a concern, with the country's chief selector Iqbal Qasim last month raising fears Pakistan might not get quality stuff in the pace department unless concerted efforts were made.

"The King of Speed camps will be set up in ten cities across Pakistan from 13 to 21st April and the trials will be held in two phases," a PCB release said.

'Pakistan's tour on'

IANS, St. John's

The West Indies Cricket Board (WICB) has brushed aside media reports suggesting that Pakistan's tour of the Caribbean this year is in jeopardy.

A WICB statement released Monday says the board remains optimistic that the tour will take place in July as planned and says negotiations are still being held to finalise plans.

A report said the tour is unlikely to take place after the WICB and the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) failed to find a new window.

"In light of recent media reports emanating from the Asian subcontinent, the West Indies Cricket Board wishes to advise the media and the public that negotiations with the Pakistan Cricket Board are ongoing with regard to finalising the schedule for the West Indies vs Pakistan series to be held in the Caribbean in July," the statement said.

According to the FTP (Future Tours Programme), the West Indies were scheduled to host Pakistan from the last week in June to the last week in July, but a tri-series involving India, Sri Lanka and West Indies have since been planned.

Pakistan was originally scheduled to play two Tests, five ODIs and two Twenty20s.

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

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Yesterdays answer 3-6

Chennai cruise to 10-wicket victory

SPORTS REPORTER

Chennai Super Kings cruised to a 10-wicket win over Kings XI Punjab in their Indian Premier League match at Mohali yesterday, thanks to a rollicking knock from Australian veteran Michael Hussey.

Being set to chase a modest target of 139, the Chennai Super Kings openers did the job with 10 wickets and 16 balls to spare. Hussey played a blitzkrieg knock of unbeaten 86 off just 54 balls, including two massive sixes and 11 boundaries. The Australian was well supported by Murali Vijay who stayed unbeaten on 50 off 50 deliveries.

Earlier, Dwayne Bravo produced a couple of late strikes as to keep the Punjab score to 138.

Sent into bat, Punjab were fairly well placed at 106 for three at the start of 15th over, when top-scorer David Hussey's dismissal for a 36-ball 41 triggered a collapse from which the hosts could never recover.

Some mindless batting by the hosts only made the task easier for Chennai, who showed discipline on the field.

Punjab relied on Hussey's knock and his 56-run stand for the fourth wicket with Gurkeerat Singh after suffering three early blows at the PCA Stadium.

David top-scored for his side with 41 while Gurkeerat added valuable 31.

The two added 56 for the fourth wicket between, before the Aussie was snared by off-spinner Ravichandran Aswhin and Gurkeerat was taken care off by Bravo, who took two more scalps to curtail the Punjab innings.

SCORES IN BRIEF

KINGS XI PUNJAB: 138 all out in 19.5 overs (Hussey 41, Gurkeerat 31; Bravo 3-27)

CHENNAI SUPER KINGS: 139 without loss in 17.2 overs (Hussey not out 86, Vijay not out 50).

Result: Chennai win by 10 wickets.

Man-of-the-match: Michael Hussey

Lara praises Sammy



IANS, Port of Spain

Cricket legend Brian Lara says his decision in the past to select Darren Sammy as a member of the West Indies team was based more on the player's passion for the game and his dependability than cricketing ability.

Lara has revealed that Sammy was one of the last two players he decided to select in a 14-man squad after ignoring suggestions to pick two other players whom he claimed were ill disciplined.

"I remember picking Darren Sammy; not for his cricketing ability, but for the way he carried about himself," said Lara, the former West Indies captain.

"We were going to play in a tournament in England and we had 14 players to pick and after 12 the two players they were asking for I didn't want on the team, because they weren't going to play, but I knew they were going to be very destructive."

Lara was responding to questions from young participants at Monday's start of a four-day symposium at the Cascadia Hotel and Conference Centre in Port of Spain.

The batting great says his decision to select the St. Lucian all-rounder, the current West Indies captain, was also because he could be relied on.

"And I remember picking Darren Sammy and a guy called Sylvester Joseph," recalled Lara.

"Darren Sammy at no point in time would have considered himself to be a future leader of West Indies cricket. He was someone who you could depend on."

Sammy has been leading the West Indies team at a crucial time as it struggles to regain its once held status as a world beater.

His captaincy has come under intense scrutiny although he has been credited with uniting the squad which became World T20 champions in St. Lanka last year.

"He's going to ensure he does what is necessary for the team to be successful. That is the way how a follower can actually help a leader, by being part of a team and willing make sure that everyone is moving in the right direction," said Lara.

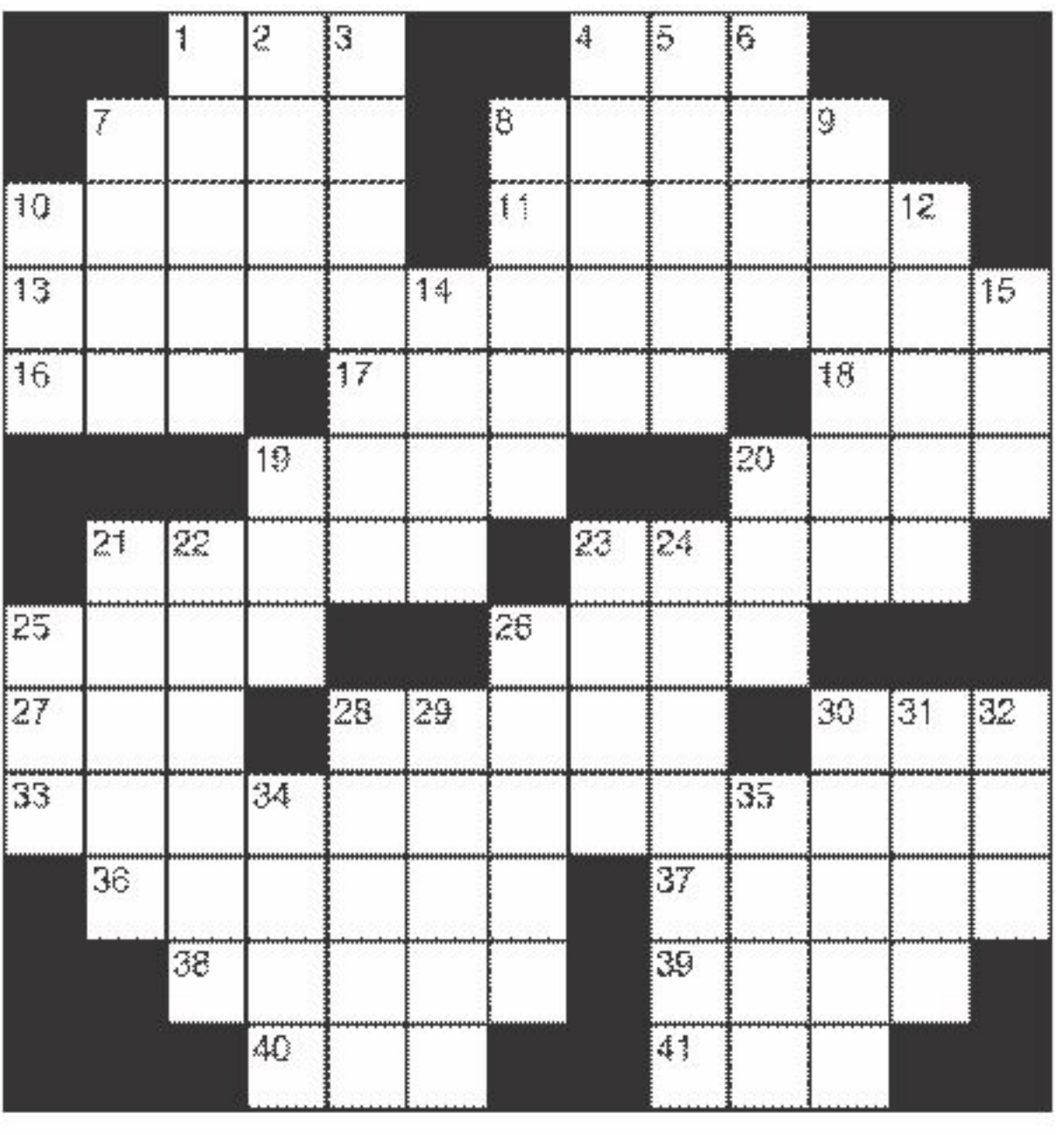
Pressure no issue, says Mushfiqur

FROM PAGE 16

practice. So we have decided to go into the series without playing any practice games this time. We will be able to put in sufficient practice in five days. On the other hand, we needed the break at home after the grueling Sri Lanka tour and we are now flying with a fresh team," said Mushfiqur.

The wicketkeeper-batsman was excited with the return of two leading players in Shakib Al Hasan and Tamim Iqbal and said that the return of some first-choice players creates a pleasant selection problem. "Yes, our young players grabbed the opportunity when they got it. So the return of some players creates a healthy competition in selection and I would love to face this kind of problem more and more in the team."

Mushfiqur's main target is to continue the consistent performances they have



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