

Nat'l Summer Athletics from Sept 7

SPORTS REPORTER

The 12th National Summer Athletics Championship will get underway at the Bangabandhu National Stadium in Dhaka on September 7. Approximately 700 athletes from 64 district teams, seven divisional teams, various universities, physical colleges, services teams, Bangladesh Railway, Bangladesh Postal Service and educational boards will compete in 36 disciplines in the two-day meet, said officials of Bangladesh Athletics Federation (BAF) at a press conference at the BNS conference room yesterday. Athletes who set new national records will be rewarded with gifts from the sponsor company RB Group and monetary rewards from BAF.

No thoughts on captaincy yet

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A split-captaincy is still an idea that needs time to be embraced. However Mashrafe Bin Mortaza had to encounter this idea upon his return from the West Indies after playing in the recently concluded ODI series. The injury-prone pacer did not outright oppose the idea of having separate captains for limited-overs and Test teams, but he was not ready contemplating the issue yet, especially when the team was gearing up for a two-match Test series against the West Indies. "I haven't given the matter any thought and nothing has been told to me. I am hoping that Mushfiqur (Rahim) does well in the Test series," responded the 'Narail Express' when the question was raised about the current Test captain and the possibility of giving him the role for the limited-overs versions as well. Mashrafe returned to Dhaka yesterday morning from the West Indies along with Abdur Razzak, Taskin Ahmed, Mohammad Mithun and Shohag Gazi, who will undergo tests for his suspected bowling action soon.

Mashrafe pointed out the lack of a combined effort behind the Tigers' 3-0 defeat in the ODI series. "We couldn't play to our expectations. They (Bangladesh team) batted well in the practice match and there are two Tests, hopefully they can do well. One department has done well, the other has collapsed. One day we bowled well, but the batting was poor. Actually our combination wasn't good in the ODI series," opined the experienced campaigner.

He however talked highly about the bowling department. "For me in the last two series our rhythm has been good. Injuries have occurred less frequently. Our bowlers are doing much better than before. Our pace bowling and spin combination is also good. If Shakib (Al Hasan) comes back and Razzak regains his form it will become even better. Batting is good one day and mediocre on another. Maybe if we get the right combination it will improve," observed Mashrafe.

"West Indies pitches are flat, similar to Bangladesh's. Gone are the days when they had bouncy wickets. And with T20Is and ODIs, now wickets are not even sporting. So in Bangladesh we have to practise against bouncers because the wickets in Australia and New Zealand may be bouncy. We have one more series to go (against Zimbabwe at home) and then there's club cricket as well. We have to train ourselves for the World Cup over there," he added.

The losses were even more frustrating due to the similar conditions of the pitches in Bangladesh and the Caribbean. This led to questions about how Bangladesh would perform in the World Cup under even more strenuous conditions.

"We played really badly. No need to shy away from that, but that doesn't mean that in the World Cup we will also play badly," said a confident Mashrafe.

Mashrafe, who will lead the team in the Asian Games, said that he will think about that event when the practice sessions get underway.



PHOTO: WTCB

Bangladeshi players celebrate slow left-armer Taijul Islam's first wicket of the West Indies tour during the second day of their three-day practice match against St Kitts and Nevis at St Kitts on Sunday. Taijul is expected to make his debut in the Test series for the Tigers.

Shiv & Shane make Tigers toil

SPORTS REPORTER



Centuries from Shivnarine Chanderpaul and opener Shane Jeffers made Bangladesh's bowlers toil hard in the three-day practice match against St Kitts and Nevis at St Nevis yesterday. In reply to Bangladesh's 377, the hosts were bowled out for 399 on the final day yesterday.

While Jeffers was more aggressive -- he hammered 22 boundaries -- Chanderpaul soldiered on with a typically resolute innings.

Chanderpaul, who had an overnight score of 70 continued with his marathon and ended up scoring workmanlike 183 off 315 balls. It was an innings which saw 20 fours and two huge sixes. With Jeffers dismissed on day two, Chanderpaul almost single-handedly frustrated the Bangladeshis for most of day 3. It was only a couple

of hours before the end of play yesterday that he was caught off Rubel Hossain.

On the second day, Jeffers hammered 118 off 131 balls to help his side finish on a strong 232 for four by close of play. It was a respite for the Tigers when Shuvagata Hom sent him back to the pavilion after lunch.

Earlier, openers Shaquille Martina and Jeffers shared a 77-run stand. Rubel Hossain got Martina caught behind and broke the stand after 20 overs.

Uncapped slow left-armer Taijul Islam then removed Javal Hodge courtesy of a good diving catch from Mominul Haque and reduced the hosts to 110 for two before lunch.

Jeffers, who seemed to be in a marauding mood, was joined by the experienced Shivnarine Chanderpaul for the third wicket and the pair shared a 51-run stand before Jeffers departed in the 46th over. The Tigers managed to

pick another wicket on day two as Mahmudullah Riyad sent Tonito Willete back to the pavilion four overs before the close of play.

Chanderpaul however, stood tall with a patient unbeaten half-century on the second day.

He continued on his methodically merry way on the third and gradually minimised the difference in runs between the two sides.

He reached his century in 275 minutes and 207 balls with a square drive through point off Robiul Islam. In the process Chanderpaul shared a half-century stand with Jeremiah Lewis.

Shuvagata, Taijul and Rubel picked three wickets each in the innings.

SCORES IN BRIEF

BANGLADESH: First innings 377 for 7 dec

ST KITTS AND NEVIS: First innings 399 all out in 127 overs (Chanderpaul 183, Jeffers 118; Hom 3-48, Taijul 3-109, Rubel 3-90)

ATLETICO closing in on Mamunul?

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Bangladesh skipper Mamunul Islam may become the first Bangladeshi footballer to have a stint with Atletico de Kolkata in the Indian Super League (ISL), a franchise-based football league, scheduled to be held from October to December this year in India.

Mamunul yesterday informed the media of his registration with the Kolkata-based franchise, one of eight franchises in the inaugural edition of the league, co-owned by former India cricket captain Sourav Ganguly and Spanish Primera Liga champions Atletico Madrid. However, no official confirmation has been made by the franchise.

Mamunul, also the skipper of Bangladesh Premier League champions Sheikh Jamal Dhanmondi Club, informed media yesterday that his name has been registered on the last day of registration on Sunday and the formal signing will be done in Dhaka next week.

"I am very happy to be selected for Atletico de Kolkata football club in the ISL. Talks with the club had been going on for the last few months, but since the name was registered yesterday, I can now announce that I will be a part of the team in the prestigious league," said Mamunul over phone from Bangladesh Krira Shikkha Protishthan, Savar while preparing for the national U-23 team's assignment in the Asian Games later this month.

"The contract will be signed on either September 5 or 6 in Dhaka in presence of Atletico de Kolkata officials. My club's (Sheikh Jamal Dhanmondi Club) president Manzur Kader gave his consent for the deal after I told him about my intention to play there.

However, when contacted, a source inside the Atletico de Kolkata franchise, on condition of anonymity, informed that even though talks regarding Mamunul have reached an advanced stage, no decision over recruiting him has been made. The final decision on whether Mamunul will be recruited will be made by the franchise's coach Antonio Lopez Habas, who is currently training the squad at the Los Angeles De San Rafael training ground in Madrid.

The inaugural edition of the ISL is expected to kick off on October 12 and December 20 is a tentative date for the final. Atletico de Kolkata, the biggest-spending of the eight franchises, have announced former Spanish international Luis Garcia as their marquee player.



Youngest US Open quarterfinalist Belinda Bencic of Switzerland pumps her fist after beating former world number one Jelena Jankovic of Serbia at Flushing Meadows in New York on Sunday.

PHOTO: AFP

Maria out, Serena thru

Bencic youngest quarter-finalist since 1997

AFP, New York



Five-time champion Serena Williams reached her first Grand Slam quarter-final of the year at the US Open on Monday, setting up a clash with Flavia Pennetta in a duel between the two oldest women left in the draw.

World number one Williams, eased past world number 50 Kaia Kanepi, 6-3, 6-3, for a fourth win over the Estonian.

"It's my first quarter-final of the year at the majors -- at last I did it," said the 32-year-old American, who had fallen in the fourth round in Australia, the third round at Wimbledon and suffered a second round French Open exit.

"It was a tough match today. I wanted to stay relaxed and told myself that whatever happens, Serena, you're still in the doubles."

Italian 11th seed Pennetta, also 32, reached her fifth quarter-final in New York with a 7-5, 6-2 victory over Australian 29th seed Casey Dellacqua.

Meanwhile, Maria Sharapova crashed out of the US Open Sunday while 17-year-old Belinda Bencic became the youngest women's quarter-finalist since 1997 giving

Switzerland a double boost after Roger Federer had moved into the last-16.

Sharapova, looking to add this year's US Open title to her French Open win in June, was undone by 43 unforced errors and eight double faults as 10th seed Caroline Wozniacki won 6-4, 2-6, 6-2.

She will next face 13th-seeded Italian Sara Errani who ended the magical run of 32-year-old Croatian qualifier Mirjana Lucic-Baroni 6-3, 2-6, 6-0.

"It means so much to me," said 2009 runner-up Wozniacki, who reached the semi-finals in 2010 and 2011 but hadn't been past the third round at Flushing Meadows the last two years.

"It's been a bit up and down for me this season. To win today against a champion like Maria is an unbelievable feeling."

Sharapova, the 2006 champion, admitted she had been outplayed.

"I thought she played really well. She made me hit a lot of balls. That's always been her strength," said the Russian.

Bencic, 17 and ranked 58th, dismissed former world number one Jelena Jankovic 7-6 (8/6), 6-3 to become the youngest US Open quarter-finalist since Martina Hingis won the title in 1997 at the age of 16.

India can wrap it up today

PTI, Birmingham



An unassailable lead in their pocket, India would look to clinch the one-day series against England by putting up another dominating display when the two sides square off in the fourth one-day international here on Tuesday.

The visitors have taken an unassailable 2-0 lead in the series after 133-run (D/L) and six-wicket wins in Cardiff and Nottingham in the second and third ODIs respectively. This was after the first ODI at

Bristol was abandoned due to incessant rain.

At Edgbaston then, the Men in Blue will be hoping to wrap things up with one match remaining in the series. Their confidence will stem from the simple fact that England have been unable to challenge them in the two matches played so far.

On current evidence, in limited-overs cricket, the hosts appear to be a completely different animal that takes the field in the Test arena. Like every other team they too are building up to the 2015 World Cup in Australia-New Zealand, but they are beset with problems.

Djokovic storms into last eight

AFP, New York



Novak Djokovic didn't let Philipp Kohlschreiber stand in the way of another Grand Slam quarter-final berth on Monday, reaching the US Open last eight with a straight-sets win over the German.

Serbia's world number one defeated Kohlschreiber 6-1, 7-5, 6-4 on another muggy day at Flushing Meadows, reaching the last eight at the US Open for the eighth straight year.

Meanwhile, second-seeded Federer on Sunday, came back from a set down to defeat Granollers 4-6, 6-1, 6-1, 6-1 by

racing away with 20 of the last 24 games of the match which had been interrupted due to rain and the threat of lightning.

Federer, bidding to become the oldest Grand Slam champion in more than 40 years, clinched his 70th win at the tournament on the back of 57 winners and 13 aces.

But the 33-year-old had struggled in the first set where he slipped to 2-5 down against the world number 42 before he grasped welcome respite in the locker room to sit out the storm.

Federer will face Roberto Bautista Agut for a place in the quarter-finals after the 26-year-old Spaniard beat France's

Adrian Mannarino 7-5, 6-2, 6-3.

Gilles Simon sent Spanish fourth seed Ferrer crashing to his earliest US Open defeat in five years with a 6-3, 3-6, 6-1, 6-3 third round win.

The 26th seeded Simon capitalised on the 52 unforced errors of the 32-year-old Ferrer, a semi-finalist in 2007 and 2012, who appeared to struggle physically towards the end.

Simon goes on to face Marin Cilic of Croatia, who beat South Africa's Kevin Anderson 6-3, 3-6, 6-3, 6-4, for a place in the quarter-finals.

Czech sixth seed Tomas Berdych, a semi-finalist in 2012, beat Georgian-born Russian

Teymuraz Gabashvili 6-3, 6-2, 6-4 and next plays Dominic Thiem of Austria, the youngest player in the top 50 at just 20.

Thiem, who turns 21 on Wednesday, reached his first Grand Slam last-16 with an impressive 6-4, 6-2, 6-3 win over left-handed serve-and-volleyer Feliciano Lopez of Spain who is 12 years his senior.

Gael Monfils celebrated his 28th birthday a day early by sweeping past French Davis Cup teammate Richard Gasquet, the 12th seed, 6-4, 6-2, 6-2.

He will face Bulgarian seventh seed Grigor Dimitrov who saw off Belgium's David Goffin, 0-6, 6-3, 6-4, 6-1.

NAT'L AGE LEVEL SWIMMING

Five records on opening day

SPORTS REPORTER

Five new national records were set on the opening day of the Cotton Group 30th National Age Level Swimming and Diving Competition at the National Swimming Complex in Mirpur yesterday, with Bangladesh Krira Shikkha Protishthan (BKSP) ruling the roost in terms of medals.

BKSP grabbed 26 gold, five silver and five bronze medals out of the 36 events that took place on the opening day. Bangladesh Ansar were in second position with five gold, eight silver and seven bronze medals while Bogra Swimming Centre were in third position with five gold, two silver and one bronze medal.

Mohammad Ariful Islam of BKSP, participating in the 18-20 age category, grabbed five gold medals including a new record in the 200m freestyle event. Mariam Khatun of Bogra Swimming centre, competing in the girls' 18-20 age category, won four gold and one silver medal while setting two new records. Do Thoi Pru Marma of BKSP

Nat'l B chess

SPORTS REPORTER

Four players shared the lead with six points each after the end of the seventh round of the 40th National B Chess Championship, which is being held at the Bangladesh Chess Federation hall room. The leaders are: IM Minhazuddin Ahmed, FM Nasir Ahmed, FM Debaraj Chatterjee and Delwar Hossain. Seven players shared second position with 5.5 points each.