



VOTE FOR DIVER-OF-THE-YEAR

The shortlist for the Fallon d'Floor -- a parody of the Ballon d'Or that rewards the best dive of the year -- has been revealed at www.fallondfloor.com. The website features movie-styled posters of the culprits and gives fans all the voting power to select

Kalabagan safe for now

SPORTS REPORTER

Abdur Razzak spun Kalabagan Kirra Chakra to a comfortable eight-wicket victory against winless Old DOHS in the fog-curtained Dhaka Premier Relegation League match at BKSP yesterday.

The delayed start reduced the match to a 30-over per-side affair and veteran left-arm spinner Razzak claimed five wickets while pacer Shahadat Hossain took three wickets to dismiss DOHS for 115 runs.

Kalabagan rode on Nasiruddin Faruque's unbeaten 46 to reach the target with eight wickets in hand.

Kalabagan improved their tally to six points and will face Partex in a decisive match on December 22. Partex have four points ahead of their match against Old DOHS tomorrow. Kalabagan and Partex will fight it out to avoid relegation, with the losing team in their match likely to follow DOHS into relegation.

SCORES IN BRIEF

OLD DOHS: 115 all out in 29.1 overs (Al-Amin 27, Nehaduzzaman 30; Shahadat 3-21, Razzak 5-20)

KALABAGAN KC: 116-2 in 23.1 overs (Nasiruddin 46 not out, Shamsur 22; Raihan 2-28)

Result: Kalabagan Kirra Chakra won by 8 wickets.

Negre lays foundation of blue turf

SPORTS REPORTER

International Hockey Federation (FIH) president Leandro Negre laid the foundation stone of the first ever blue synthetic turf at the Maulana Bhasani Hockey Stadium yesterday. The Spaniard, who wrapped up his four-day visit to Bangladesh late last night, hoped the new blue turf would herald a new chapter in Bangladesh hockey.

This is the third synthetic turf at the premier hockey venue of the country. The first one at this venue was installed in 1996 and the second one was laid ten years later.

The blue turf, which is the most widely used turf on hockey pitches around the world at present, is being installed with joint financial cooperation from the Olympic Council of Asia (OCA), FIH and the Bangladesh government.

The removal of the green turf will begin today and it will take around one and a half months to complete the installation process of the new turf. The green turf will then be transferred to the BKSP ground in Dinajpur.

Tsonga out of Hopman Cup

AFP, Sydney

French number one Jo-Wilfried Tsonga on Thursday pulled out of January's mixed team Hopman Cup in Australia due to an arm injury, organisers said.

Tsonga, who with partner Alize Cornet won the tournament this year, said he was disappointed at not being able to defend the title. "I'm disappointed I have to withdraw from the Hopman Cup as I was looking forward to returning to Perth to play with Alize," said the world number 12.

"But a persisting injury to my arm has given me no choice but to withdraw from the event."



Japan U-21 midfielder Harakawa Riki (2nd from R) takes a free-kick during the FIFA Friendly against Bangladesh at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

Good Japanese lesson

SPORTS REPORTER



The gulf of difference between Japan's football and that of Bangladesh's was starkly exposed at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday as the national team of Bangladesh went 0-3 down against the U-21 side of that country in a Category 2 FIFA Friendly.

The young brigade of the second-ranked Asian side, being groomed for the 2016 Olympic Qualifiers and the 2018 World Cup, toyed with the hosts and left the field with three second half goals. The match turned into a one-way traffic as the young Japanese players kept the hosts on their toes and confined them mostly in and around their own danger zone. The hosts, on the other hand, left the field dejected and left 15,000-something crowd dejected too.

But given the yawning gap in FIFA rankings -- the hosts at 176 and the Japan senior team at 52 -- such an outcome was apprehended, if not guaranteed. The Bangladesh players, who hardly get an opportunity to rub shoulders with Asian powerhouses, will hopefully take this as a learning experience ahead of next month's Bangabandhu Gold Cup.

Chances for Japan started racking up right from the very sixth minute when Minamino Takumi narrowly failed to connect to an inviting cross by right-back Matsubara Ken.

Rasul Mahmud Liton had to be at his best to block an Arano Takuma attempt from point-blank range in the 16th minute before the young custodian smothered a powerful shot from Yamanaka Ryosuke three minutes later.

The hosts, starting with a 4-2-3-1 formation, had their odd moments when the ball reached Zahid

Hossain or Hemanta Vincent Biswas in the flanks. Their moves were greeted with loud cheers from the crowd, even if their forays were cut short even before the final third.

The last scoring opportunity of the opening half for Japan came in the 38th minute when Takuma threaded the ball through for Takumi, whose attempt was partially blocked by Liton. The rebounder fell in the middle of the box, only to be cleared by defender Yamin Munna before another Japanese forward could pounce on the loose ball.

Japan should have broken the deadlock in the 55th minute when Yajima Shiya's neat cutback found Kamekawa Masashi completely unmarked inside the 12-yards, but the tall centre-back's miscued attempt went wide off the target.

The deadlock was finally broken on the hour-mark when Takuma stabbed home a defence-splitting

through-ball from Harakawa Riki.

That goal opened up gates as Bangladesh's defence, which was thus far defending with commendable efficiency, looked unsettled and struggled to mark the fleet-footed Japanese strikers. The insertion of Suzuki Musahi further injected pace in the Japanese attack and the hosts, now defending with five men at the back, struggled to keep the attacks at bay.

Suzuki initiated an enterprising move in the 73rd minute, playing a neat one-two with Takuma and Minamino, before the latter picked the far corner of the net with a sumptuous left-footed volley. Two minutes later, Takuma grabbed his second and Japan's third goal, powerfully driving home a cutback from Takumi.

With three goals in the bag, the visitors took the foot off the gas, letting the clock run down and giving some reprieve to their beleaguered hosts.

Hashim hits double tons

AFP, Centurion



South African captain Hashim Amla hit his third Test double century and Stiaan van Zyl made a hundred on debut before rain brought a premature end to the second day of the first Test on Thursday.

Amla made 208 and the left-handed Van Zyl hit an unbeaten 101 as South Africa piled up 552 for five declared.

But rain swept across SuperSport Park soon after the declaration, preventing a start to the West Indies first innings and denying Amla the chance to make inroads into the tourists' batting.

It was another day of suffering for a depleted West Indian bowling attack.

Left-arm spinner Suleiman Benn took the only two wickets to fall on Thursday, dismissing AB de Villiers for 152 and having Amla caught on the long-on boundary.

In between, Amla and Van Zyl put on 155 off 37 overs for the fifth wicket, while Benn was forced to toil for 46 overs and conceded a total of 148 runs.

The West Indies were without fast bowler Kemar Roach, who left the field on Monday afternoon after injuring his right ankle. A team spokesman said scans had revealed no significant damage but it was hoped he would be able to bowl later in the match.

Roach's injury left the tourists with only three front-line bowlers, with Jerome Taylor and Sheldon Cottrell providing pace and Benn needing to tie up one end with spin.

SCORES IN BRIEF

SOUTH AFRICA: First innings 552 for 5 decl (Petersen 27, Elgar 28, Amla 208, De Villiers 152, Van Zyl 101 not out; Roach 2-52, Benn 2-148)

WEST INDIES: Ramdin, Brathwaite, Smith, Johnson, Samuels, Chanderpaul, Blackwood, Roach, Taylor, Benn, Cottrell.



South Africa captain Hashim Amla raises his bat to celebrate his double century on the second day of the first Test against West Indies at SuperSport Park in Centurion yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

Smith strikes a balance

AFP, Brisbane



Steve Smith again proved the elusive wicket for India as the new captain led an Australian fight-back on Day Two of the second Test on Thursday.

Smith, who was not dismissed by India in last week's Adelaide Test win with scores of 162 and 52, continued to be the bane of the tourists with another defiant knock.

His intuitive stroke-making was again a delight and he danced down the wicket to club spinner Ravichandran Ashwin for two sixes over long-on in one over.

At the close, with a storm brewing, Australia were 221 for four in reply to India's 408 with Smith unbeaten on 65 and Mitchell Marsh on seven.

The Australians lost the wickets of David Warner (29), Shane Watson

(25), Chris Rogers (55) and Shaun Marsh (32) in the final two sessions.

Shaun Marsh, recalled as a replacement for injured skipper Michael Clarke, had registered six ducks in his previous 15 Test innings but Thursday looked to have overcome his series of poor starts.

He had a big let-off on 32 when Ajinkya Rahane put down a sitter at leg gully off Varun Aaron in the 45th over.

But he was out two overs later, caught by Ashwin in the slips off Umesh Yadav on the same score.

Rogers missed a chance to post a much-needed big innings when he was out in the over before tea.

He raised his sixth Test half-century with a cut for four off Ashwin as he looked for runs in Brisbane after recent batting failures.

Debutant Josh Hazlewood captured five wickets and Brad Haddin equalled a wicketkeeping record as Australia dismissed India for 408 at lunch.

ECB wants WC finals at Lord's

REUTERS, London

Lord's should host the 2019 World Cup final, the England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) recommended to the International Cricket Council (ICC) on Wednesday.

Lord's, which staged the World Cup final in 1975, 1979, 1983 and 1999, has also been put forward to host the women's World Cup final in 2017.

The ECB also suggested to the ICC that the opening game of the 2019 tournament should be staged at The Oval, London with the semifinals to take place at Old Trafford, Manchester and Edgbaston, Birmingham.

The ECB confirmed that Edgbaston and Old Trafford have been allocated Ashes Tests for the 2019 series.

Waqar wants a win

AFP, Abu Dhabi



Pakistan coach Waqar Younis feels a win in the fifth and final one-dayer against New Zealand in Abu Dhabi on Friday will give his team a boost for next year's World Cup.

New Zealand levelled the five-match series 2-2 with a narrow seven-run win in Abu Dhabi on Wednesday, setting up an intriguing finale to the tour after the preceding three-match Test and two-Twenty20 series were shared 1-1.

Waqar said the series would give Pakistan an idea on where they stand before the February-March World Cup to be co-hosted by Australia and New Zealand.

"We need to win the final one-day," said Waqar on Thursday.

"This series is for us to utilise and get the clear picture who are the final 15 [players for the World Cup] and besides that win this series."

Waqar praised veteran batsman Younis Khan who scored his first one-day century in six years and stand-in skipper Shahid Afridi who smashed 25-ball 49.

"Younis's form was very important, he has shown us his true potential," said Waqar of the 37-year-old batsman whose 103 went

in vain as Pakistan fell seven short when chasing a challenging 300-run target.

New Zealand were guided to 299-5 by skipper Kane Williamson's 123.

"Afridi also batted well and showed fighting abilities."

Waqar blamed poor fielding. "Honestly, we lost the match because of the fielding, we gave away some 20-25 runs in the field and that is a worrying sign for me," said Waqar, who praised the fighting spirit of his team, taking the match to the final over.

"I am happy at the fight, the expectations we had with our batting were fulfilled and we maintained a nine plus average, unfortunately we couldn't finish that but the fight pleased me."

Williamson said good partnerships built his team's total.

"It was just about executing the plans we had, and just trying to build partnerships and it was great to come back with the ball in the second part of the Pakistan innings," said Williamson.

"Pakistan kept coming, they showed consistently how good they are. To have 300 on the board on a wicket that was tiring, they pushed us and it was nice to pick up some timely wickets at the end and close it out."

Williamson hoped his team improves further on Friday.

'We failed to mark third attacker'

SPORTS REPORTER



Despite keeping the Japan U-21 side at bay till the 60th minute on the face of an onslaught of attacks, the Bangladesh national team suffered a 0-3 defeat, thanks to three goals in the space of 15 minutes.

The Bangladesh defenders thwarted numerous attacks in the first half, defending deep and resolutely, but as the game wore on, they struggled to contain the three-pronged attack of the Japanese youngsters. The Bangladesh defenders were especially guilty of failing to mark the third attacker, who operated from a deeper position, felt Bangladesh coach Saiful Bari Titu.

"The Japanese players are way ahead of us in terms of technique and skill," said the interim coach of Bangladesh. "We could not track down their third attacker in the second half even though the boys blocked the spaces they were searching for in the first half," said Titu during the post-match press briefing.

The former Bangladesh international, who adopted a counter-attacking strategy, felt the first goal was the turning point of the match but thought the result could have been different had they resisted Japan for a few more minutes.

"If we could have stopped them for a few more minutes, they would have played more aggressively and we could have got some space upfront. But our players failed to play according to the plan after conceding the opening goal," said Titu.

Japan coach Teguramori Makoto said they studied the Bangladesh team closely and decided to neutralise their three forwards Emily, Zahid and Sohul.

"We studied their strength and saw that their three forwards can turn the table around with their speedy run and skill. We made them dysfunctional and dictated the game."

The Japan coach believes Bangladesh can play better if they go on concerted attacks which Japan follows.

"When a Japanese player goes on attack, two more players go out to help him. But I saw when a Bangladeshi player goes on attack, only one player goes for the help. If Bangladesh can improve in this section, I think they can improve further," ended Makoto.

Mangongo sacked

CRICINFO, Harare

Stephen Mangongo has been fired as Zimbabwe's coach just eight weeks before the World Cup. Mangongo's dismissal comes after the team lost all eight fixtures on their recent Bangladesh tour, which included three Tests and five ODIs.

No replacement has been announced but Zimbabwe Cricket will hold interviews next week and unveil a new coach after Christmas. Mangongo, who had been in the position for five months, will be redeployed to work with the national Under-19 side because the administration believes he is "good at identifying talent," according to ZC chairman Wilson Manase.

The board announced Mangongo's departure on Thursday afternoon after a meeting. "The ZC board has decided to relieve Stephen Mangongo of his duties as head coach with immediate effect," Manase said.

While Mangongo's tenure included the notable success of Zimbabwe's first one-day international win over Australia in 31 years, he had faced criticism over his brusque coaching style and handling of players. Mangongo had replaced Andy Waller, who was moved out of the position in July. Waller was given an overseeing role in ZC, looking after cricket at all levels from age-group to the academy, and may come back into contention.

Givemore Makoni, Zimbabwe's convenor of selectors and a man widely thought to be a key ally of Mangongo, retained his post, while it was also announced that the selection panel would be widened to include the national coach, bowling coach Douglas Hondo, former team manager and long-serving administrator Babu Meman and the national captain.