

FEDERER CELEBRATES ON MOUNTAIN

Roger Federer was on top of the world as he rolled back the years to win the Australian Open title in January, with the Swiss star taking his tennis to new heights. Federer's victory over Rafael Nadal in Melbourne saw him earn a first Grand Slam title in nearly five years and ensured he picked up the 18th of his illustrious career. The celebrations continue, with the 35-year-old now taking the famous trophy to the top of a snow-capped mountain to fulfil a personal ambition of his. He even attempted a serve atop of the peak, before posting three images to mark the occasion on Instagram. He captioned the images: 'Always wanted to take the trophy to the top of a mountain. From down under to up high.'

-AGENCIES



The roll ball kaleidoscope

ATIQUJE ANAM

The 4th Roll Ball World Cup, which is currently taking place in Dhaka, has had a lot of drawbacks, ranging from the relaxed rules and teams' lack of preparation to the mismanagement by the organisers, but one thing is for sure: this game has landed a diverse range of people from all over the world in the Bangladesh capital. There are 65 teams -- men's and women's -- from 38 countries of five continents, and the players have brought with them varied perspectives and stories.

FROM PEANUT SELLER TO PROLIFIC SCORER

16-year-old Deen Islam Hridoy could hardly have dreamt that he would be playing in a world cup six years ago, when he used to earn a living for his family by selling peanuts next to the Abahani ground. But as luck would have it, he fell in love with skating, watching kids skate inside the complex and on the street outside. He showed some promise in what he loved, and caught the Bangladesh team captain Newsif Hossain Dipro's attention, who took him to the Bangladesh Roller Skating Federation officials.

He got a job at the federation as a skating instructor before being drafted into the roll ball team two years ago. While he still instructs young kids how to roller skate, he has become the mainstay in the Bangladesh team, scoring 15 goals in the first two matches as Bangladesh cruised to the knockout stages. The young boy, who lost his father at a very tender age, is happy to play his part in this congregation.

"I now earn somewhat of a living from skating and I thank the federa-



(Clockwise from left) Former peanut seller Deen Islam Hridoy is riding on a wave of excellent form for the hosts in the 4th Roll Ball World Cup while Vesna Gabor of Slovenia is loving every experience in Dhaka. The Nepal kids are happy to be in the mix too.

tion officials and the team captain for that," Hridoy said ahead of yesterday's match against Fiji. "I had loved skating instantly when I saw kids doing it, and probably that's why I don't have to go about selling peanuts now. Instead, I'm here playing at a world cup."

VESNA HAPPY DESPITE BEING ONE PLAYER SHORT

Many of the European and South American teams that have come here have basically taken to roll ball through word of mouth, with their

original choice of sport being ice hockey, roller in-line hockey or basketball. The Slovenia team is no exception. Having found a few to switch to this sport from in-line hockey and basketball, the Slovenian women's team could still manage only five players to bring to Bangladesh, while the official number of players should be six at least. But they do not seem bothered about being a player short. Team member Vesna Gabor says they are trying to put up a fight with whatever they have while the main objective is to gain experience and enjoy being in a new country.

"We have to make do with what we have, and even though we lost to India today [Sunday], we won against Fiji yesterday. So it's not all that bad. Plus we are getting to mix with a lot of new people in this new place, which is nice. I'm actually happy to be away from the cold in Ljubljana," the pink-haired player said.

13 GOING ON 30?

Roll ball skating can be a dangerous game as it is usually played on a hard surface and involves physical contact. So you would not expect to see kids rubbing shoulders with grown men on roller skates. But that seems to be the case, at least with the Nepal team. The South Asian nation has come here with a large contingent, so much so that their team includes quite a few 13-year-olds. Two of them were on the subs bench during yesterday's match against France, after having played on the previous day. Interestingly, rather than concentrating on what their teammates were doing, they seemed more keen on playing candy crush on their android smart phones. Can't really blame the kids for that little distraction, can we?

Ibra sends MU to Chelsea clash

AFP, Blackburn



THE FA CUP

Paul Pogba and Zlatan Ibrahimovic combined to score the winning goal that carried Manchester United through to the FA Cup quarterfinals in a 2-1 win at Blackburn Rovers.

United will face Chelsea in a mouthwatering last-eight tie at Stamford Bridge next month as victory maintained Jose Mourinho's interest in all four competitions in which his side have competed this season.

The holders were facing the prospect of an unwanted replay after Marcus Rashford equalised Danny Graham's opening goal which prompted Mourinho to bring the high-profile pair off the bench early in the second half. On 75 minutes the gamble paid off as Pogba, from just inside his half, played a pass for Ibrahimovic to chase.

The Swedish striker timed his run to perfection, avoiding the offside trap before coolly rolling his 24th goal of the season into the corner of the net from six yards. There was almost an equaliser after Sergio Romero spilled a, recovered to keep out Marvin Emnes' rebound then saw Anthony Stokes tap the ball in only to be flagged offside.

Earlier, Blackburn had taken the lead through a superbly-executed 17th minute move that even had Mourinho sportingly applauding from his position in the United technical area.

Emnes carved out the opening with a strong run and skilful move past Marcos Rojo before he slipped through a brilliant pass for team mate Graham who beat Romero with a superb left-foot finish.

It was the first goal conceded by United in 471 minutes of league and cup football and Graham, a journeyman 31-year-old with the 13th club of his career, threatened to join the list of this weekend's FA Cup heroes.

But United had other ideas and took just 10 minutes to draw level as Henrikh Mkhitaryan sent Rashford racing away with a magnificent pass from around halfway.

His speedy team-mate chased onto the ball and calmly rounded the goalkeeper before converting into an open net. The second period failed to live up to the excitement of the first as United enjoyed plenty of possession without finding a way to pick a hole in the home defence.

By the hour mark, and presumably desperate to avoid a replay, Mourinho threw Pogba and Ibrahimovic into the action and the pair almost gave United the lead within a minute.

Bangladesh in pre-quarters

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh men's and women's teams moved into the pre-quarterfinals of the 4th Roll Ball World Cup thanks to wins and a walk-over in yesterday's matches.

The men's team won their first match of the day in Group D against Myanmar by 11-0 goals at the Hussain Shaheed Suhrawardy Indoor Stadium in Mirpur. That win took them to pre-quarterfinals, and they later won the group's final match against Fiji 9-0 at the Shaheed M Mansur Ali National Handball Stadium to go through to the last 16 as group champions.

Meanwhile, the women's team got walk-over in the morning against Philippines, who failed to come to Dhaka. The walk-over was enough to earn them two points and see them through to the last 16.

LAST 8 DRAW

- Chelsea v Manchester United
- Middlesbrough v Huddersfield/Man City
- Tottenham Hotspur v Millwall
- Sutton United/Arsenal v Lincoln
- *Ties to be played 10/13th March

Maradona in Hamsik's sight

AFP, Milan

Marek Hamsik moved to within three goals of Diego Maradona's Napoli record in a 3-1 win as Maurizio Sarri's are now in this place.

Slovakia midfielder Hamsik had moved to within four goals of Maradona's 115-goal club record with his maiden Serie A hat-trick in a 7-1 rout at Bologna two weeks ago taking his tally to 111.

And the 30-year-old attacking midfielder moved a step closer to becoming the southerners' all-time top scorer with an easy tap-in seven minutes before half-time.

Maldives smiles on home-grown coaches

ANISUR RAHMAN from Chittagong

There was a time when Bangladesh supremely dominated Maldives on the footballing plain. But the roles have been reversed now. The change of fortune was quite evident when Bangladesh played an international friendly against the emerald island nation on their home turf where they suffered a humiliating 5-0 defeat last year. And on Saturday Maldives extended their national team's dominance to the club level when little-known Trust and Care Sports Club handed Bangladesh Premier League champions Abahani a 1-0 defeat in the on-going Sheikh Kamal International Club Cup.

Although Maldives are still not a force to be reckoned with in Asia, but they have already reached a certain level in South East Asia with a group of talented footballers as well as the relentless efforts from some individuals in their country. Mohammad Nizam, who guided TC Sports Club to the top tier in their domestic league, is one of those many cogs that took Maldives football forward.

"There are lots of individuals who love football and contribute to develop the game in Maldives. The federation is trying hard to develop the structure and facilities. Even the government is very much focused on football, helping all the way in term of fund, facilities, developing infrastructures, and providing other facilities the FA needs," Nizam told this reporter yesterday.

Maldives are also getting technical assistants from Europe and Middle East apart from the regular funds they are receiving from AFC and FIFA. The former left back of Maldives, for whom it was the fourth visit to Bangladesh and his second in the capacity as a coach, said that educated coaches are playing a major role in developing Maldives football.

"We have got approximately 1000 coaches including pro-license ones, who are really putting a lot of efforts from grassroots to the club levels. I will say they are playing the major role of Maldives' football development. They are also getting financial supports from FA, Clubs and the government," said the former national left-back of Maldives.

The number of coaches in Maldives is certainly astonishing considering it is a country of approximately 3.5 million people. And that figure is mind-boggling

compared to what Bangladesh, a country of 170 million, have -- 200 odd qualified coaches including 17 AFC A licensed coaches.

"Some 12 to 13 academies are being run in Maldives and there is big demand of football academy in Maldives. There are over 5000 footballers in those academies at the moment," added Nizam, who has been involved in coaching for 14 years after retiring from the national team.

The 42-year-old coach observed that skills and speed of the players has improved a lot and that gives them the edge against their opponents.

"You know you need a certain quality to catch. The Maldives players are too quick and fast on the pitch and are very skillful



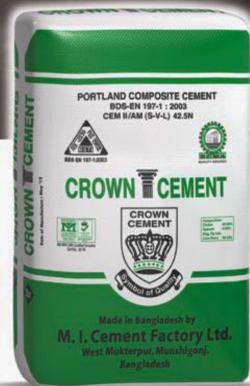
MOHAMMAD NIZAM

though the players are physically behind," said Nizam.

"I think we have some quality players and there are four to five who can replace Ali Ashfaq in future. Honestly, our new generation of players is more talented and I think we are in the right path to grow up," added a confident Nizam.

Replying to a query on where Bangladesh are faltering, Nizam said: "When I came here as a player, I hardly saw any cricket bat or cricket field. Now I see cricket pitch next to every football ground. See in Sri Lanka, once we lost to them 5-0, 6-0 but now we do the same thing because cricket is catching everything [over there]. I think the same thing happened in Bangladesh."

Nizam's biggest disappointment in his fourth visit to Bangladesh was 'the empty stands that surprised me'.



আমার বর্গমালার মতোই দৃঢ় হোক আমার নির্মাণ

