

Sri Lanka break India’s dominance



Sri Lanka batters Harshitha Samarawickrama and Kavisha Dilhari celebrate after the latter hit the winning runs in an eight-wicket thrashing of India in the final of the Women’s Asia Cup final in Dambulla yesterday. The hosts won their maiden Asia Cup title which means that they and Bangladesh are the only two nations to have lifted the trophy other than seven-time winners India. After restricting reigning champions India to 165 for six, Sri Lanka captain Chamari Athapaththu and Samarawickrama smashed half-centuries, and the duo put together an 87-run stand for the second wicket to help the Lankans complete a comprehensive run chase with eight balls to spare. Samarawickrama, who struck six fours and two sixes for a 51-ball 69, was adjudged the player of the match, while Athapaththu who took her tournament tally to 304 runs with a 43-ball 61 - laced with two sixes and nine fours – was declared the player of the tournament.

PHOTO: ICC

‘ICC understands that everything is all right’

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) president Nazmul Hassan Papon yesterday said that his presence at the International Cricket Council (ICC) Annual Conference satisfied the governing body’s concerns regarding the unrest in the country and assured them that the forthcoming ICC Women’s T20 World Cup in Bangladesh could go ahead as planned.

Cricknet website Cricbuzz had earlier reported that the ICC were monitoring the situation in Bangladesh following unrest in the country.

However, Papon, who returned to Dhaka on Saturday after attending the ICC conference in Colombo, said there was no formal discussion on the matter and claimed that the ICC officials are no longer concerned about Bangladesh hosting the tournament, which is set to run on October 3-20.

“When I went there, the situation in the country was dire. There was no way to communicate outside Bangladesh. They [ICC] were concerned with the news they were getting,” Papon said in a press conference yesterday.

“After seeing me, they understood that everything is all right. After that there was no discussion about this in the ICC meeting,” he added.

The BCB president also informed that the next ICC board meeting will take place in Bangladesh, where the ICC election could also take place.

OLYMPICS CORNER



Paris ‘sorry’ over opening ceremony controversy

AFP, Paris

Organisers of the Paris Olympics said Sunday they were “really sorry” for any offence caused by their daring and quirky opening ceremony.

Some Catholic groups and French bishops have condemned what they saw as “scenes of derision and mockery of Christianity” in the parade on Friday.

“If people have taken any offence, we are of course really, really sorry,” Paris 2024 spokeswoman Anne Descamps told reporters on Sunday.

Saudi hails first female Olympic swimmer

REUTERS, Paris

Saudi dignitaries on Sunday hailed the performance of Mashaal Alayed, the first female swimmer from the kingdom to compete in an Olympics.

The 17-year-old is the only female swimmer in the delegation and smashed her personal best to come sixth of seven in her 200 metres freestyle heat.

Girls were banned from participating in sport at public schools until 2017 and women not allowed into sports stadiums until the following year in the Islamic state.

Princess Reema bint Bandar bint Sultan, an influential member of the Saudi Olympic committee and the kingdom’s ambassador to Washington, wrote on X “Proud to cheer on this young woman! Breaking boundaries! Mashaal Alayed.”

Marchand fires up PARIS POOL

AFP, Paris

French hero Leon Marchand threw down the gauntlet with a storming 400m medley swim Sunday as Mollie O’Callaghan outgunned Ariarne Titmus to top the women’s 200m freestyle heats.

Marchand is the Olympic hosts’ big hope after last year demolishing Michael Phelps’ 15-year-old world record in a phenomenal 4min 2.50sec.

The 22-year-old, trained by Phelps’ old coach Bob Bowman, had not dipped under 4:10 this year as a number of his rivals did, piling on the pressure.

He rose to the occasion on day two at a packed La Defense Arena to touch in 4:08.30 as a raucous crowd went wild, more than a second clear of Britain’s Max Lichfield and two seconds ahead of Japanese veteran Daiya Seto.

In an upset, American defending champion Chase Kalisz failed to reach the final, ending his bid to make the podium for a third time after also winning silver at Rio 2016.

“It was almost like a football stadium but in a pool. Everyone was chanting my name, it was crazy,” said Marchand, who is gunning to end a 12 year French gold medal drought in the pool.

“I think I was prepared. I was able to stay in my performance. I had a



very strong 250m and then I relaxed a little.

“If I can free myself as much as possible from my body, from my mind, it will be great. I think it’ll be fun,” he added of Sunday’s evening final.

At the 2021 Olympics, France took home just one swimming medal, Florent Manaudou’s silver from the 50m free. They haven’t won gold since London in 2012, when they collected four.

Marchand will also swim the 200m medley and 200m butterfly.

Defending 200m champion Titmus was back in the pool a day after taking out the 400m title ahead of Summer McIntosh and Katie Ledecky.

She showed few signs of tiredness, easing into the semi-finals third fastest behind pace-setting teammate O’Callaghan (1:55.79).

Titmus shattered O’Callaghan’s world record last month at the Australian trials to set a new best of 1:52.23.

O’Callaghan also went under her previous world record in coming second, making the pair overwhelming favourites for gold on Monday.

“Definitely hard to back up after last night, but I think I tried to stay as calm as I could last night and try and forget about what happened this morning really,” said Titmus.

“On to another day, 400’s done now, so 200’s the focus.”

HP need six wickets to win against Pak Shaheens

SPORTS REPORTER

The four-day match between Bangladesh Cricket Board High Performance Unit and Pakistan Shaheens is set up for an exciting finish with the HP side needing six wickets and the Pakistanis requiring 160 runs on the final day to win the match at the Marrara Oval in Darwin yesterday.

The Pakistan Shaheens reached 136-4 at stumps on Day three, chasing 296, with Haseebullah Khan and Tayyab Tahir batting on 44 and four respectively.

BCB HP, who had resumed the day’s play on 84-3, managed to reach 216 in their second innings before running out of wickets.

Overnight batters skipper Mahmudul Hasan Joy and Aich Mollah struck 65 and 58 respectively for HP while Pakistan Shaheens pacer Mohammad Ali claimed 6-63.

Pakistan Shaheens started their reply strongly, courtesy of skipper Sahibzada Farhan hitting a 70-ball 68 during a 96-run opening stand with Haseebullah.

Joy stopped Sahibzada’s onslaught, sending him back in the 22nd over before HP gained a stronger foothold with pacer Rejaur Rahman Raja, who bagged three wickets in the first innings, getting two crucial wickets in successive overs.

Hasan Murad then got HP their fourth scalp before stumps were called.

Previously, the HP Unit had posted 258 in their first innings and bowled out Pakistan Shaheens for 179 to earn a 79-run lead.

McBrine shines as Ireland beat Zimbabwe

AFP, Belfast

Andy McBrine starred with both bat and ball as Ireland beat Zimbabwe by four wickets in a one-off Test in Belfast on Sunday after recovering from a dramatic top-order collapse.

Set just 158 to win in the shadow of Stormont Castle, Ireland had slumped to 33-5 at the close of Saturday’s third day, with Zimbabwe left-arm quick Richard Ngarava doing the bulk of the damage in a sensational burst of 4-12 in four overs.

But in the first Test to be played in Northern Ireland, the home side lost just one more wicket on Sunday.

Ireland’s four-wicket win over Zimbabwe in the one-off Test in Belfast was their first home win in the format.

Lorcan Tucker (56) and McBrine, who completed a fine all-round match to be 55 not out, turned the tide after coming together when Ireland had collapsed to 21-5.

They added 96 for the sixth wicket before Tucker chopped on from Blessing Muzarabani with Ireland still 41 runs short of victory.

Mark Adair, however, who was born in nearby Hollywood, settled quickly making 24 not out and hitting the winning boundary as Ireland finished on 158-6 to triumph with more than a day to spare.

Off-spinner McBrine was named player of the match after the 31-year-old took a combined 7-75 across Zimbabwe’s two innings.

“McBrine is the guy you want to put in your cricket bag and take everywhere. Exceptionally skillful and deserved the award today,” said Ireland captain Andy Balbirnie.

Victory gave Ireland, who lost their opening seven Tests, a first home win in the format and back-to-back successes after they had beaten Afghanistan for their Test first win in March.

“We did believe last night,” said Balbirnie. “We had our two best batters out (there). That partnership was special. It was fitting for Mark, hometown boy, to get us over the line.”

Stormont became the second Test venue in Ireland after Malahide and the 123rd in the history of Test cricket.

“Probably didn’t think growing up that there’d be a Test here,” said McBrine, who comes from the Northern Ireland village of Donemana.

“We tried to be as positive as we can.”

McBrine said he had been “working hard behind the scenes” on his bowling before paying tribute to Ireland’s quicks.

“It was not an easy wicket to bowl on but the way they rotated allowed me to take wickets as well.”

Zimbabwe captain Craig Ervine was left thinking of what might have been had they been able to continue on Saturday night when Ireland were on the ropes at 33-5.

“We’d have liked five, six more overs last night,” he said. “Our games against have Ireland have always been competitive.”



England pacer Mark Wood claimed five wickets in four overs -- three in a single over -- to skittle out West Indies for 175 in their second innings, making things easier for the batters as England had only 82 runs to chase down on the third day of the final Test in Edgbaston yesterday. England skipper Ben Stokes, who promoted himself to open the innings, then butchered the Windies bowling attack to lead England to a crushing 10-wicket win before tea and complete a 3-0 series whitewash with more than two days to spare. Stokes smashed an unbeaten 28-ball 57, getting to his fifty off just 24 balls -- fastest by any England batter in the format.

PHOTO: REUTERS