



ALOK KAPALI

Nothing than winning

AFP, Durban

Barring a miracle, Bangladesh will finally end their embarrassing streak of 26 straight defeats when they begin their World Cup campaign at the Kingsmead here on Tuesday.

The confidence stems from the fact that their opponents in the day-night encounter are Canada, who came through the qualifying ranks to take part in only their second World Cup.

Victory, however, cannot be taken for granted since the Canadians, comprising mainly West Indian and Asian immigrants, did win one of their two matches against Bangladesh so far.

Bangladesh have struggled to compete with the big boys, having succeeded in just three of their 61 one-day matches since being granted one-day international status in 1985-86.

And one of those victories was marred in controversy when they toppled mighty Pakistan in the previous World Cup in England four years ago amidst cries of foul play.

Bangladesh's confidence has been lifted by a 4-1 win over fellow World Cuppers Namibia in a warm-up series last month, which featured an astonishing innings of 177 off 145 balls by opener Al Shahriar in the last game.

Unfortunately for Bangladesh, those matches did not have one-day

international status.

A bigger morale-booster was the five-wicket win Bangladesh managed in a practice match against South African provincial side KwaZulu-Natal last week following Ehsanul Haque's 92 and 68 from Saharar.

The same KwaZulu side defeated Saurav Ganguly's India the following day.

"The wins over Namibia and KwaZulu-Natal has put us in the right frame of mind for the World Cup," said captain Khaled Mashud.

"We know our limitations. We are expected to compete only against Kenya and Canada, but I am confident we will put up a good fight against the fancied teams as well."

Bangladesh, Canada and Kenya are placed in group B which also includes hosts South Africa, New Zealand, the West Indies and Sri Lanka.

Three of these teams will qualify for the super-six stage of the tournament.

"If we play consistently, we will do well," said Mashud, the 27-year-old who has spoken of quitting the captaincy after the World Cup to concentrate on his wicket-keeping.

Canada, coached by former West Indian batsman Gus Logie, made their only World Cup appearance in 1979 when they were shot out for a record low of 45 by

FORM GUIDE

Bangladesh v Canada

AFP, Durban

Recent one-day international form guide ahead of the World Cup clash between Bangladesh and Canada at Kingsmead here on Tuesday:

BANGLADESH (won 0 lost 9 NR 1)		
Dec 3, 2002	lost to West Indies by 86 runs	Dhaka
Dec 2, 2002	lost to West Indies by 84 runs	Dhaka
Nov 29, 2002	N/R vs West Indies	
Chittagong		
Oct 9, 2002	lost to South Africa by 7 wickets	
Kimberley		
Oct 3, 2002	lost to South Africa by 168 runs	
Potchefstroom		
Oct 2, 2002	lost to South Africa by 10 wickets	Benoni
Sept 23, 2002	lost to New Zealand by 167 runs	
Colombo		
Sept 9, 2002	lost to Australia by 9 wickets	
Colombo		

Gone in seconds

REUTERS, Cape Town

Captain Shaun Pollock put his side's epic defeat by West Indies in the World Cup's opening game down to a matter of seconds after South Africa were docked one over because of slow bowling rate.

South Africa came up three runs short chasing 279 for victory from 49 overs, although the fact they even came close was largely down to an extraordinary innings by Lance Klusener.

The left hander struck five sixes in a rapid half-century but was caught in the deep in the final over, eight runs short of seeing his side to victory.

"When it comes down to seconds you do feel a little bit hard done by," a visibly exhausted Pollock said.

"The ball was lost in the sightscreen and then the sightscreen wouldn't turn over and the drinks trolley doesn't come on too quick. All those things are taken on board by the umpires and they said to us that we were just a couple of seconds or so short of having the

full 50.

"If we'd had an extra over we could have taken things a bit easier, but that was the decision and when we went out to bat we knew it was 49 so we can't complain.

"To get so close you do feel a bit robbed but we didn't play well enough in the middle period of the game to warrant really getting that close," Pollock said.

Pollock also paid tribute to Klusener, whose innings was in stark contrast to the form he has shown in recent months.

"I don't think it's ever over while Lance is at the crease. He's struggled in the last few months with his batting but today he showed the value of what Lance Klusener brings to the party.

"It was a superb knock and ideally you would have liked that last shot to have gone out of the ground, but it didn't.

"Without him though we wouldn't have had a chance -- he was superb."

Happy Hooper

INTERNET, Johannesburg

West Indies captain Carl Hooper was pleased with his team's performance in a crucial match of the World Cup, after the Windies beat South Africa at Newlands on Sunday.

"The victory is important in the context of the tournament," Hooper explained.

"You expect a team like South Africa to go through to the Super Sixes, so a victory against them is of course important.

"It sets up the tournament for us, because we are off to a good start. There will be more confidence in the side," he added.

The match was hard-fought, with a changing balance of ascendancy throughout. The Windies started off the poorer, losing early wickets, but rallied to post a magnificent 278.

The South Africans suffered a poor start to their chase, but in the latter overs out of the blue manu-

factured a chance at stealing the win. Lance Klusener played a lone hand that ended in the final over with the hosts three runs short.

"Even if you look back at the start we had today, the manner in which we came back and made 270-odd was really good," Hooper continued.

"Playing against a side like South Africa, even though they were struggling in the early part and we kept on picking wickets up, you always knew towards the end that they would not let go without a fight."

The West Indies next play New Zealand in Port Elizabeth on Thursday.

Hooper admitted that he would be tempted into playing an extra seamer should St. George's offer a green wicket. However, the skipper was loath to make changes to such a successful formula of three specialist seamers and two all-rounders.



PHOTO: AFP

THERE GOES THE NEIGHBOURS' WINDOW! South African-Indian Moona Rambally hits a straight drive while his family members watch from behind the litter-bin stump in their drive-way at Phoenix near Durban on February 9.

WC dessert!

AFP, Durban

Minnows Bangladesh and Canada find themselves serving up a World Cup dessert at Kingsmead on Tuesday when their day-night clash follows the day's main course of Australia against Pakistan at the Wanderers.

Despite their match being very much in the shadow of the giants at Johannesburg, Canada coach Gus Logie believes that his team of bit-part players can rise to the occasion as they feature in their first World Cup since 1979.

"We may lack the experience but we have some very good players in the squad and if they follow the basics of sound cricket judgement they will more than hold their own," promised Logie.

He said that much would depend on all-rounder John Davison, who has played in South Australia, and others such as spinner Barry

SEE PAGE 14

Jayasuriya's fear

INTERNET, Bloemfontein

Sri Lankan captain Sanath Jayasuriya has accused Muttiah Muralitharan's critics of trying to "destroy" the spinner's career.

Muralitharan has been under increasing scrutiny after a string of injuries and his country's controversial tour of Australia.

The 30-year-old was heckled with shouts of "no ball" during the tour following accusations that he was throwing the ball when bowling.

And on Friday, former New Zealand cricketer Ian Smith poured further scorn on Sri Lanka's leading wicket taker in one-day cricket, describing him as a "chucker".

But Jayasuriya said: "Murali is under a lot of pressure and is coping a lot of stick from the press.

"I'm really not sure what people want from him. If they want to try and take him down and destroy one of Sri Lanka's greatest ever cricketers, they're going the right way about it."

He's still breaking the laws of cricket and therefore should not be allowed to bowl

SEE PAGE 14

Aussies are coming

REUTERS, Johannesburg

Australia captain Ricky Ponting has reaffirmed his team's commitment to play their World Cup match in Zimbabwe.

"While England again delayed their decision on whether to fulfil their fixture against the co-hosts in Harare on Thursday, Ponting said he expected Australia's match in Bulawayo on February 24 to take place.

"The only reason we won't be going to Zimbabwe is if the security and safety issue gets a lot worse over the next couple of weeks than it is at the moment," said Ponting on Sunday.

"The players, the ACB (Australian Cricket Board) and the ICC (International Cricket Council) have been keeping a close eye on that for the last couple of months.

"They have been pleased with

SEE PAGE 14

African solidarity

AFP, Johannesburg

South Africa have threatened to cancel their post-World Cup tour of England if Nasser Hussain's men refuse to play their February 13 tournament opener against Zimbabwe in Harare, according to a British newspaper.

Monday's Daily Telegraph reported that, during Saturday's World Cup opening ceremony at Cape Town's Newlands ground, United Cricket Board of South Africa (UCBSA) president Percy Sonn warned England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) chairman David Morgan that the Proteas might refuse to tour England where they are due to play five Tests in the northern summer.

England's players and the ECB have both voiced security concerns about proceeding with the match in famine-threatened Zimbabwe, saying they are worried about the safety of spectators as well as themselves.

They fear ugly scenes if Zimbabwe security forces crack-down on opponents of President Robert Mugabe who might use the

game as a forum for political protest. However, despite months of agonising and numerous rounds of last-ditch talks, they have still to announce whether they will play the game or not.

Meanwhile Sonn, apparently affronted by what he sees as a slight to his neighbours, in what is being promoted as an 'African' festival of cricket, has reportedly told Morgan about the safety threat that exists in the United Kingdom.

According to the Telegraph, he cited the death of a policeman in Manchester, northern England, on anti-terrorist duty and also made reference to recent comments by Tony Blair, the British Prime Minister.

Blair warned, that because terror incidents were now a fact of modern life, and in particular given Britain's headline stance against the Al-Qaeda terror network and his government's willingness to counter-terrorist military action against Iraq, the country was at risk as never before.

His government has also been one of the strongest international critics of the Mugabe regime and he has called on England to boycott their match in protest at its alleged

human rights abuses while saying he cannot compel the side to withdraw.

A similar stance has been taken by the Australian government, which is also fiercely hostile to Mugabe.

English cricket has yet to be blighted by the cancellation of tours on safety and political grounds that have affected other Test nations such as Pakistan.

But the ECB have warned that withdrawal from Harare could ultimately cost them as much as 10 million pounds (16.4 million dollars).

That takes into account both a fine for missing the match itself and the cost of any subsequent cancellation of Zimbabwe's two Test tour of England in the early part of the northern summer.

South Africa arrive later in the season with all three countries expected to take part in a triangular one-day series as well as their respective Test campaigns.

ECB chief executive Tim Lamb has already said a Zimbabwe withdrawal could have dire financial consequences for English cricket.

But, with over 80 per cent of their

SEE PAGE 14

McGrath confident

INTERNET, Johannesburg

Glenn McGrath has predicted that Australia will retain the World Cup by going through the tournament

unbeaten. Seam bowler McGrath took 18 wickets to help his side win the trophy in England four years ago,

but they were beaten by New Zealand and Pakistan in the first round group stage.

"After having to win the hard way in 1999, our goal for the 2003 World Cup is to go through the tournament undefeated, something I believe this team can do," he told the Sunday Telegraph newspaper.

"With such tremendous talent in the squad and great faith in each other's ability, I am convinced that special things are in store for us in South Africa."

McGrath has now recovered from a back problem which forced him to miss the final of the recent VB Series against England.

He expects to play in their opening game against Pakistan in Johannesburg on 11 February, a repeat of the 1999 final.

No team has managed to win the World Cup twice in succession since the West Indies in 1975 and 1979.

But McGrath believes Australia are up to the task despite a hectic season at home, which also featured five Ashes Tests.

Australia have won 65 of the 89 one-day internationals since the 1999 final, a success rate of over 73 per cent.

They expect hosts South Africa to mount a strong challenge.

McGrath thinks, however, that Australia will have a psychological edge when the two sides meet.

"Remember that last year we played well against them to record a convincing 5-1 scoreline in front of their home crowds. I'm confident we can beat them again when it matters.

"The Proteas play with a lot of confidence against every other team but us. I feel as though they don't believe they can beat us and that attitude has helped us score some big wins over them."



PHOTO: AFP

WHO SAYS WHITE MEN CAN'T JUMP! Australian pace ace Glenn McGrath jumps for a catch during practice at Johannesburg yesterday.

Mashud with a 5mission

AFP, Durban

Bangladesh skipper Khaled Mashud may quit captaincy after the World Cup, but not before helping his team end a record sequence of defeats.

"I just want to play as a member of the team after the World Cup in order to spend more time with my family," said Mashud, nicknamed "Pilot".

After 26 straight losses, Mashud gets a chance to change the trend when Bangladesh clash with minnows Canada in a day-night match at the Kingsmead here on Tuesday.

Bangladesh are clubbed with South Africa, the West Indies, New Zealand, Sri Lanka, Canada and Kenya in the preliminary Group B.

But Mashud was determined to bow out on a high note, saying he only expected his team to repeat the last Cup performance in England where they managed to win at least two matches.

"We just want to repeat the same performance this time also," said Mashud, the only player to have figured in all the three Bangladesh wins so far in 61 one-day internationals.

"We are capable of beating both Canada and Kenya. It will be nice to pull off an upset win like we did in the last World Cup," Mashud said.

Mashud, who made his one-day debut against India in the 1994-95 Asia Cup, is not an exciting stroke-player but a gutsy lower order batsman capable of putting up a stiff resistance in crisis.

He is the highest run-getter in the current team, having made 659 in 51 one-dayers.

Mashud, 27, is also tidy behind the stumps as he has accounted for 47 dismissals in one-dayers, including nine stumpings.

Observers say Mashud is an asset as a captain also because of his positive attitude and the ability to lead from the front.

"We need to be strong and learn how to win against the better sides but at the same time we will not underestimate the likes of Canada. The World Cup is different in every aspect to every other cricket tournament and that is a lesson to be remembered by one and all," warned Mashud aware of the shock his team caused when they beat Pakistan by 62 runs at the last World Cup.

Always cricket

AFP, New Delhi

Indian Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee on Monday for a moment took his mind off the scourge of terrorism to pray for Saurav Ganguly's squad that will play their arch-rival Pakistan on March 1 in South Africa.

"Just look at the spirit of internationalism that today pervades the cricketing world, with the start of the World Cup tournament in South Africa," Vajpayee told a conference, where he flayed Pakistan for fuelling "terrorism."

Vajpayee, in one of his rarest comments on cricket, however, hinted that he too was rooting for the Indian team, which will play

SEE PAGE 14



PHOTO: AFP

BEDAZZLED! A South African fan sports a hat with the World Cup mascot Dazzler on top at Newlands on February 9 during the West Indies-South Africa match.