



PHOTO: STAR

It can't get any worse, can it?

Bangladesh captain Khaled Mashud (L) and coach Mohsin Kamal discuss strategy during a training session.

Lara the unmerciful

AFP, Benoni

Brian Lara has pledged to pile on the misery for Bangladesh's hopelessly outclassed team as the West Indies aim to get their World Cup campaign back on track here on Tuesday.

After an impressive and nail-biting three-run win over South Africa in their first match of the tournament in Cape Town, the Windies came crashing back down when they were beaten by New Zealand in Port Elizabeth.

"With all due respect to the minnows, we have to score emphatic wins against them, since we don't want to face a situation like we did in 1999 when we went out because of run rate," said Lara who was skipper at the last tournament in England and where the mathematics of the situation meant they were denied a place in the Super Sixes.

Furthermore, Lara warned that the momentum that had been built up with their win over the hosts had been squandered against the Kiwis whose batting display in the field thwarted the West Indies run chase.

"If we are going to win matches, it is necessary for one of our top

three batsmen to take us into the last ten overs or so. Unfortunately, that did not happen against New Zealand.

"So a score that was more than gettable, proved to be beyond our reach," Lara wrote in his Trinidad newspaper column.



BRIAN LARA

"We usually approach our batting in four parts - aggression, accumulation, acceleration and finish.

"We were out of sync with all of them in Port Elizabeth and we lost

our way between the tenth and 15th over."

Lara was full of praise for the batting of Ramnaresh Sarwan (75) and wicketkeeper Ridley Jacobs (50) who featured in a stand of 98 for the seventh wicket against New Zealand and are being relied upon

for valuable late runs.

"Having to get eight runs per over in the last ten overs is not a problem if you have wickets in hand. But Sarwan and Jacobs had to take chances and preserve their

wickets at the same time.

"They did well and showed tremendous character - something which this team has in abundance."

"I think there is a general feeling of disappointment but we are not going to allow this game to change our focus, we have already flushed it out of our system and are putting things in place to move on."

By contrast, Bangladesh only have pride to play for having lost to Canada and Sri Lanka, defeats which extended their losing run to 27 out of 28 matches, the other being washed out.

Captain Khaled Mashud conceded his team was not playing well.

"We are capable of doing better than this, but the batting is just not working," he said.

TEAMS

WEST INDIES (from): Carl Hooper (captain), Ridley Jacobs, Shivnarine Chanderpaul, Corey Collymore, Mervyn Dillon, Vasbert Drakes, Chris Gayle, Wavell Hinds, Brian Lara, Jermaine Lawson, Nixon McLean, Ricardo Powell, Marlon Samuels.

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Aussies class apart

REUTERS, Johannesburg

Just over a week into the 2003 World Cup and it's already clear that the event has been devalued by the decision to allow too many under-prepared, outclassed minor teams - 13 out of 14, in fact - to take part.

Australia began the event as huge favourites, with South Africa, Pakistan and India supposedly tucked in their slipstream.

Since then, Ricky Ponting's side have pulverised Pakistan and made a nonsense of Indian pretensions, beating them by 82 runs and nine wickets respectively in two simply awesome displays.

On Sunday, South Africa, not helped by the rain gods, lost their second Pool B match in three, beaten by nine wickets by New Zealand.

The hosts, desperate to become the first team to win the trophy on home soil, now face an uphill battle just to qualify for the next round, needing to win their remaining three games while hoping other results go their way. "It's very difficult now (to qualify) but we still have hope," said skipper Shaun Pollock.

"We still believe we can get through. (The revised target and) the conditions didn't help much but,

in the end, they outplayed us.

"We're just hoping for a lifeline now...things are now out of our control."

Stephen Fleming's run-a-ball 134 not out turned the tables on Herschelle Gibbs's run-a-ball 143 at the Wanderers.

Before Sunday, the New Zealand captain had managed to get to three figures just three times in 184 one-day innings but he did it when it counted as New Zealand, set a revised target of 226, cruised home with 13 balls to spare. Fleming put on an unbeaten 140 for the second wicket with Nathan Astle.

Sunday had been a must-win game for both sides.

New Zealand seem set to lose four points after refusing to play Kenya in Nairobi because of safety concerns.

"We got together (before the run chase against South Africa) and said it was our last chance," Fleming added.

"I've waited a long time for an innings like that."

England, who have already been forced to forfeit their Pool A game against Zimbabwe because of

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PHOTO: STAR

GROUNDING! Mashrafe bin-Mortuza sits on the ground while fellow pacemen Monjurul and Talha pose for a photo during practice.

Mashrafe misery

AL-AMIN from Benoni

Bangladesh's ever-receding hopes of a dignified performance suffered a crucial blow ahead of their third World Cup game against the West Indies with young paceman Mashrafe-bin Mortuza pulling out injured.

The 19-year-old pace sensation twisted his right ankle during training at Willowmoore Park and is certain to miss the match.

Mashrafe's injury was result of a freak incident when he stepped on the ball and slipped while trying to field with his boot. He was immediately taken to a nearby hospital where the X-ray report confirmed that he has tore a ligament.

Although the extent of the damage was not immediately known, nevertheless it is a serious concern for Mashrafe who has just returned to international duties after a year out of the game nursing various injuries.

"I don't know why these things always happen to me. I have fought with injuries for the last one year and suddenly it has struck me once again", said a grim-faced Mashrafe.

The strike bowler of Bangladesh took two wickets for 34 against Canada in the ill-fated opening game.

Mashrafe's unfortunate absence has however opened the doors for

another exciting pace prospect Talha Jubair who will make his World Cup debut.

The 17-year-old did well against the West Indies in the home series early this year. He also impressed when Bangladesh toured South Africa last October. During that tour, Talha became the youngest Bangladeshi bowler to record a four-wicket haul in a one-day international match.

Bangladesh captain Khaled Mashud said that Talha apart there will be two more changes from the team that lost against Sri Lanka by ten wickets in the second game.

Opener Hannan Sarker, the first victim of Chaminda Vaas' hat-trick in an extraordinary first over at Kingsmead, has been dropped.

"Tushar Imran will replace Hannan. That's why either Mohammed Ashraf or Ehsanul Haque will open the innings with Al-Shahriar," said Mashud.

Mashud also informed that experienced all-rounder Khaled Mahmud will come in for paceman Taposh Baishya. Mahmud did not play the first two games against Canada and Sri Lanka.

"We have considered Mahmud to strengthen our batting which has so far failed. Besides, I believe using more slow bowlers against the West Indies would help us," observed the

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AFTERSHOCKS

I feel betrayed by the way our cricketers performed in their previous two games, first one against Canada and the other against Sri Lanka. Our batsmen got themselves out in a fashion that exposed their desire to leave the crease as early as possible.

The players nowadays receive psychological help to prepare their minds for the rigors of international cricket. I would like to ask the psychologist associated with our cricket team some questions regarding the psychic state of the team in general:

a. Was it inhibited by anything on or off the pitch?
b. What caused the lapse of concentration on both occasions? Was there something more alluring than bringing glory for the country?

—Asifur Rahman, East Kafrul, Dhaka

ATTENTION BTW

I write this having seen the New Zealand versus South Africa World Cup

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HEAD TO HEAD

Bangladesh v West Indies

AFP, Benoni

Head-to-head record of West Indies against Bangladesh who meet in a World Cup Group B match here on Tuesday:

Dec 3 2002	West Indies won by 86 runs	Dhaka
Dec 2 2002	West Indies won by 84 runs	Dhaka
Nov 29 2002	No Result	Chittagong
Oct 9 1999	West Indies won by 109 runs	Dhaka
Oct 8 1999	West Indies won by 73 runs	Dhaka
May 21 1999	West Indies won by 7 wickets	Dublin
Total matches: 6		
West Indies wins: 5, Bangladesh wins: 0, No Result/Tied: 1		

Still under the spell

AL-AMIN from Benoni

The Bangladesh cricketers are desperate not to be branded 'the laughing stocks of the 2003 World Cup' in their remaining four Pool B games. But it is easier said than done. Opener Al-Shahriar is still haunted by the extraordinary first over of Lanka paceman Chaminda Vaas.

"It was a dreadful experience. I never saw Hannan (Sarkar) play such a reckless shot back home," he said recalling Vaas' first three deliveries.

"When Ashraf came to face the second ball, I just told him to play straight since the bowler might try and nip one back. Unfortunately, Ashraf did exactly what I asked him but the ball stopped a bit before popping up straight back to the bowler."

"After he got Ashraf, Vaas even told me that he did not want to play because his back felt rather stiff when he woke up in the morning."

The experienced Al-Shahriar never expected that Ehsanul Haque would become the left-arm Vaas' hat-trick victim.

"When (Ehsanul) arrived at the crease I said that he would be facing another trademark in-swing. Vaas did try to bowl that delivery but suddenly it moved away catching

him square."

He said that the leg before decision against Sarwan was unfortunate.



AL-SHAHRIAR

nate. But the right-handed Al-Shahriar admitted that the pressure told on him as he faced Dilhara Fernando in the next over.

"I have played a lot of top-class bowlers in my career but my hands were shaking while facing the first delivery," he explained at the Standton Sun Hotel before the team left for training on Sunday at Benoni where Bangladesh play West Indies on February 18.

Al-Shahriar said their defeats against Canada and Sri Lanka had really upset players.

"It was the worst Eid in my life.

We did not even feel like talking to each other, let alone eat a plate of sweets. Still being a professional cricketer one must accept the criticism."

Even the advice of the team's South African physiologist Greyward Clinton who said prior to the match: "Do not think of the crowd, media and especially your opponents. Instead concentrate on what you are capable of doing in the middle," failed to the trick.

Al-Shahriar who knows South African conditions better than anybody else in the team, still believed that is the best possible team even though it is under-performing.

He admitted that he should not have played over the top against Vaas and also blamed Alok Kapali for playing a similar shot.

Sitting beside Al-Shahriar, the young right-hander affectionately called 'Sir' by his teammates, only said a few words about Hannan's outrageous shot.

"I have not seen him play the shot in the nets."

And the man in question himself could not explain the reason.

"I don't know. I swear I have never played that way even in the slog overs," said the right-hander before getting onto the team bus.

African treats

AL-AMIN from Benoni

It's bugging Bangladesh captain Khaled Mashud that nobody came to console the battered cricketers after their infamous defeat against Canada and he feels a little show of tolerance from the officials could've made life easier for them.

"Everybody is upset and feeling disgraced. But nobody tries to understand that we are just as upset, probably more. I have seen most of the team breaking down in tears inside the dressing room but we players can't show that kind of emotion in public, can we?"

"We are still living a nightmare following that defeat and whenever we come across any official from the Board (BCB), their grumbling makes the situation worse."

GREYWARD TREATMENT GOING WRONG!

For Clinton Greyward it's a double blow. The South African team psychologist had a brief stint with Bangladesh in Namibia last month.

But his two-week workout with the Tigers not only failed to make an impact but it appears now that sessions with him are a recipe for disaster.

Greward looked dazed on return to Standton Sun Hotel with a shattered South African team after their nine-wicket defeat against New

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Fleming no fool

AFP, Johannesburg

South Africa discovered on Sunday that you underestimate New Zealand and their skipper Stephen Fleming at your peril.

They may not be as overwhelming favourites as Australia, but are capable of making life miserable for other fancied teams in the World Cup as the Proteas found out to their cost at the Wanderers, as the Black Caps pulled off a nine-wicket win despite chasing 306.

Fleming is a shrewd captain who has earned accolades as much for his leadership as for his gutsy batting and he acknowledged on Sunday that he sensed his time had come after his match-winning 134.

"A lot was on the line. It was a must-win situation and as captain I felt I had to make my mark as a player. It's the World Cup. This was my day."

Acknowledged as one of the most cerebral international captains, Fleming admitted to concern that he had not always performed well enough as a player.

"It's an honour to lead your country but to win a game as a player is a bigger thrill. It gets respect and you feel better about yourself as well. You make better decisions when you're feeling confident."

He added that a let-off when South African wicketkeeper Mark Boucher dropped him on 53 off

Jacques Kallis was "a big moment in the game".

"It came at a time when things

were getting a bit loose. That often happens when you're chasing a big score and then two or three wickets

can fall and the game is over. It was a

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PHOTO: AFP

LEADING FROM THE FRONT: New Zealand captain Stephen Fleming (R) and Nathan Astle return after defeating South Africa on February 16.