



TEARS IN THE RAIN: A disappointed South African fan weeps after her team was knocked out of the tournament in Durban on Monday.

South Africa weeps

REUTERS/AFP, Johannesburg

South Africa woke up to one dominant sporting image on Tuesday the incredulous, crushed face of cricket World Cup skipper Shaun Pollock.

Pollock appeared on the front of all of the country's newspapers after his team's cruel first-round exit from the tournament after their rain-affected Pool A match against Sri Lanka ended in a tie.

The Star displayed three pictures of Pollock under the banner headline "Heartbreaking". In the first, he stared out blankly at the Durban rain which was to kill off both the day-night game and his side's hopes.

The next photograph had him with his head in his hands and the third looking away to the side, as if for help.

"Shock. Horror. Despair," said the three captions.

The Star's main sports headline blamed cricket's "Weather gods".

"It seemed as if vice-captain Mark Boucher, who was batting with Lance Klusener, was given the wrong message when light drizzle started falling," it said.

The disappointment echoed not only the 1999 tournament, when the team was knocked out of the semifinals after a tied match against Australia, but also 1992, when rain had also left them cruelly short during a run chase, again in the semifinals, against England.

"Last night the nightmares of 1992 and also the 1999 World Cup returned to haunt them and it will remain with them for many years to come," said The Star.

"Polly devastated by another tied exit," proclaimed the tabloid Citizen, its inside pages telling of how the "World Cup love-hate relationship continues".

Had South Africa scored one more run in Durban they would have won under the Duckworth-Lewis system for deciding rain-affected matches.

South Africa had hoped to become the first host nation to lift the trophy. Had they won on Monday, they would not only have qualified but also taken 10 points with them, leaving them in good

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Rain god not African

REUTERS, Durban

South Africa were left cursing the cricketing gods for the third time in the last four cricket World Cups on Monday.

For the second tournament in a row, they found themselves eliminated having tied their final match.

For the second time since 1992, they fell victim to rain.

In 1992, the South Africans had looked on course for victory against England, with 22 runs needed for

victory off 19 balls, only for the rain to begin falling.

Under the rain rules of the time, the target remained unchanged. By the time all-rounder Brian McMillan and wicketkeeper Dave Richardson got back to the crease, there was only time for a single ball to be bowled.

In 1996, the team were not cheated by the gods but by a divine talent as Brian Lara scored a 94-ball 111 for West Indies in Karachi to knock them out in the quarterfinals.

Cruelly, the margin of defeat was 19 runs, just the same as in 1992.

Four years ago and South Africans suffered the cruellest cut of all.

Having lost to Australia in the Super Six stage, they looked in a winning position at Edgbaston with the scores tied on 213 after big-hitting all rounder Lance Klusener had struck the second ball of the

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POSITIVE RAIN! Groundsmen at the Queens Sports Club in Bulawayo pull on the covers to protect the wicket after rain forced the Pakistan v Zimbabwe game to be abandoned yesterday. Rain wasn't so kind to South Africa though.

Cup not for hosts

AFP, Johannesburg

South Africa's dramatic exit from the World Cup only confirmed one of the event's great truths: the host nation shall not win cricket's showpiece.

A calculation error was the final nail in a disastrous campaign for Shaun Pollock's men who were eliminated after the first round when their rain-hit match against Sri Lanka ended in a tie under the Kingsmead lights on Monday night.

Play was halted when South Africa were on 229 for six after 45 overs, chasing a Sri Lankan total of 268 for nine. According to the Duckworth-Lewis method, the scores were level.

Pollock admitted the batsmen at the crease, Mark Boucher and Lance Klusener, were told they needed to get 229 instead of 230 which would have lifted South Africa to the top of Pool B instead of being knocked out.

Pollock also conceded his team had failed to play to their full potential but said they had been dogged by bad luck in the key games against the West Indies, which they lost by three runs, and New Zealand, which was also decided on the Duckworth-Lewis method.

"It's very disappointing. Probably we were not as dominating as we have been in the past," Pollock said.

The pressure of playing before their own fans had taken its toll on

the host team in the seven previous editions of the World Cup and it was no different this time.

When England hosted the first three World Cups, their best finish was the runners-up spot in 1979 when they lost to the West Indies in the final.

When Asian rivals India and Pakistan co-hosted the next tournament in 1987, they bowed out in the semi-finals.

Australia won the title in India that year and Pakistan followed suit in 1992 when the World Cup was held in Australia and New Zealand.

Sri Lanka beat the world when the tournament returned to the Indian sub-continent in 1996, but

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Time to go

STAR SPORT REPORT

Cricket in Bangladesh has been struck such a blow with the pathetic showing in the World Cup that it will take super-human efforts and tons of luck to turn things around. And even then, there's no guarantee that the game will ever regain its cult status among an out of patience population.

Everyone across the country is calling for wholesale changes in the cricket administration, more specifically in the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB), and fans, players, organisers and anybody associated with cricket are unanimous in the opinion that we need to start afresh.

If reports published in reliable national dailies on Monday are to be believed (and there's no reason not to), then the self-ruling BCB boss Ali Asghar Lobi, MP thinks that we have to begin from the scratch to revitalise our cricket. What Asghar also needs to understand is that you just can't begin anew with the same old faces, who have carried Bangladesh's cricket to its lowest ebb, still running the show.

The ruling party lawmaker has blamed the players' lack of commitment, pointed fingers at the manager, coach, physio, trainer and everybody associated with the

squad and warned all that they have to face an inquiry committee made up of a retired Army officer and a retired government bureaucrat" on return home from South Africa.

While creating the perfect scenario to make the team the scapegoat for his own failures, Asghar seems to be trying to shield his chaotic BCB set-up that has delivered nothing but controversy over the last one and a half years.

It is also clear that the BCB chief is not on the same wavelength with the national sentiment. Otherwise how could he suggest something as dull-witted as appointing an ex-

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ALI ASGHAR

Kiwis' delight in Proteas' plight

REUTERS, Johannesburg

New Zealand captain Stephen Fleming was delighted his team reached the World Cup Super Sixes on Monday, but said he could not help feeling sorry for South Africa.

The Kiwis sneaked through when South Africa's must-win match against Sri Lanka ended in a tie under the Duckworth-Lewis scoring method after rain forced the players off the pitch.

Fleming and his teammates watched the game on television after beating Canada in their final Pool B fixture earlier in the day.

"It was incredibly hard. I guess

you don't like to see a situation like that for another team," Fleming told the New Zealand Press Association. "But from our own point of view we are just delighted to go through."

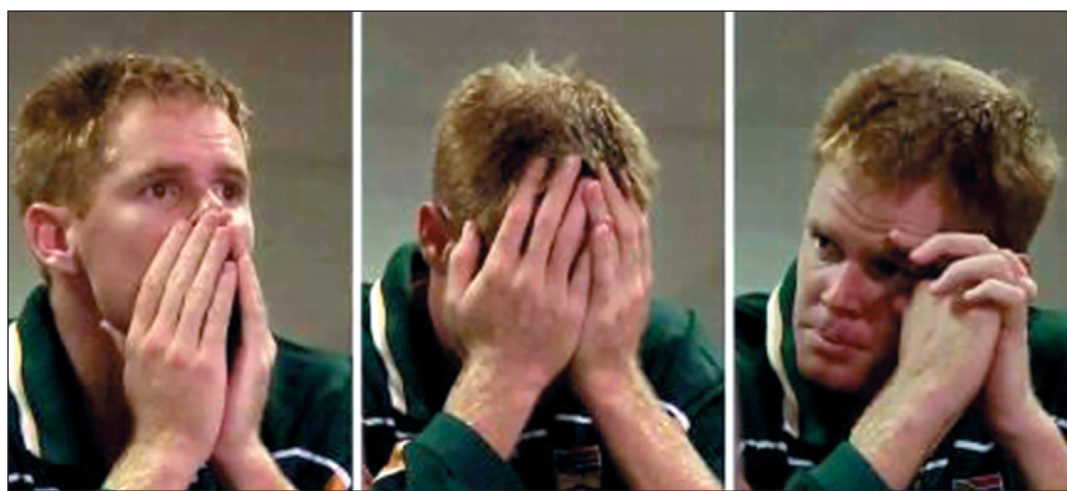
"It just doesn't get any closer than that. The last four days have been pretty tense trying to work through the run rates, then just watching a game which controlled so much of your destiny."

New Zealand beat South Africa in another rain-affected match and lost only one game on the pitch during the opening round. They were in danger of missing out, however, because of their decision

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STEPHEN FLEMING



CRY FOR ME SOUTH AFRICA: Combination picture shows South African captain Shaun Pollock's frustration on Monday as he watched rain dash his side's hopes of progressing to the Super Six stage.

Costly miscalculation

REUTERS, Durban

South African captain Shaun Pollock conceded that a miscalculation in the dressing room cost his team the chance of victory over Sri Lanka after Monday's rain-affected tie sent the hosts tumbling out of the World Cup.

With rain falling and the game set to be cut short, Pollock said 12th man Nicky Boje had got a message to Mark Boucher in the middle that, in the case of a revised target, 229 runs would be needed for South Africa to win. In reality, 230 were required.

Boucher hit what proved to be the penultimate ball of the match from spinner Muttiah Muralitharan for six to take the

score to 229, then defended the final delivery of the over.

"Boje wasn't able to get out there and give them the piece of paper to keep, but the message that was portrayed was 229," a clearly emotional Pollock said afterwards.

"But you can't look at that and worry about that. He (Boucher) didn't know the game was going to finish after that ball."

"If you lose a wicket, all of a sudden the score goes up. There was a lot that went on after that ball before we came off. If we'd faced one more ball of the next over and got one off that, we could have been through. There are lots of ifs and buts."

Pollock, who could be seen with

his head in his hands as the rain continued to fall, said his squad felt the downpours had abated enough for the teams to return to the field and complete the match.

"We just felt that it had got to the stage where it was raining the same. There's no rule that says you can't go out if it's spitting. But they (umpires Steve Bucknor and

Srinivas Venkatraghavan) decided it was unfit for play and you have to go by the umpires' decisions."

"You can look at all the ifs and buts but in the end it doesn't help much."

Sri Lanka had posted a total of 268 for nine after winning the toss. Under the Duckworth-Lewis scoring system, victory targets can be revised up or down, depending how much time is left and how well the chasing team has been batting, if matches are curtailed by rain.

Neither Pollock nor coach Eric Simons could explain exactly how

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Quips & Quotes

AFP, Johannesburg

Who's saying what at the World Cup:

"The message that was portrayed was 229. We can't look at that and worry about it. We were trying to keep them updated as much as possible but at the end of the day you can't judge when the rain's going to come."

South Africa skipper Shaun Pollock on the miscalculation against Sri Lanka which cost them a place in the Super Six.

"People are always joking about my weight and fitness so it was great to have a day like this."

The sturdy Feiko Kloppenburg after becoming the first Dutch player to hit a one-day international century in the win against Namibia.

"They love their soccer as part of a fitness programme. I'm sure it was all in good and high spirits."

Pakistan coach Richard Pybus after a training brawl in Bulawayo between Inzamamul Haq, Younis Khan and Saeed Anwar.

All's well that ends well

AFP, Johannesburg

Sanath Jayasuriya's Sri Lanka emerged unscathed after a topsy-turvy week at the World Cup when they swung between the sublime and the ridiculous before qualifying for the Super Sixes.

Last Monday, the 1996 champions were in danger of being eliminated when they crashed to a stunning 53-run defeat against Kenya at Nairobi, a performance Jayasuriya described as amateurish.

Four days later, they braved a heroic display by Ramnaresh Sarwan to oust the West Indies by six runs under the Newlands lights at Cape Town.

Facing a do-or-die clash against South Africa on Monday, the Sri Lankans allowed themselves to be distracted by run-rate rules, complained to the International Cricket Council and then took the field under protest after their appeal was rejected.

Luckily for Sri Lanka, Marvan Atapattu hammered a super century, veteran Aravinda De Silva struck form and the South Africans forgot to bring a calculator to the ground.

By the 34th over of South Africa

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WE'RE GOING TO THE SUPER 6s: The Sri Lankan team celebrate seeing South Africa crash out on Monday.

PHOTO: INTERNET