

Vermeulen fractures skull

AFP, Bloemfontein

Zimbabwe batsman Mark Vermeulen suffered a hairline fracture to his skull while batting in the nets here Friday.

Vermeulen was struck over the left eye by a rising delivery from Travis Friend and will miss Zimbabwe's opening World Cup Super Six match against New Zealand here on Saturday.

"I was trying to pull the ball but then suddenly it just got very, very big in front of me," said the 23-year-old.

"It was certainly a shock but I think I should be alright to play again next week."

Useful break

REUTERS, Johannesburg

Fast bowler Nathan Bracken believes time off during the current season after a spell of poor form helped him secure a place in Australia's World Cup squad.

"Things were going alright for me, then I had a week off for a while and I thought I was never going to get another wicket again," Bracken told reporters after arriving on Thursday as replacement for the injured Jason Gillespie.

"Then I had a week off, didn't play any club cricket, had some rest and came back, started taking wickets again and really enjoying it."

"I was just getting flat and tired...having a week where I could just chill out and do nothing did wonders for me."

The 25-year-old left-armed was called up after Gillespie suffered a tendon strain in his right heel.

Bracken, who has played 11 one-day internationals, is the second Australia replacement. Off spinner Nathan Hauritz was drafted in after Shane Warne tested positive for diuretics.

Jayasuriya relief

FROM PAGE 13
against India on Monday in Johannesburg, he replied: "Wait and see."

There was a big boost for the side, even as they slip towards defeat against Australia at Centurion.

Sri Lanka physiotherapist Alex Kountouri had said earlier after Jayasuriya had been led from the field after facing five balls: "It's not looking good, we suspect a fracture."

What really

FROM PAGE 13
competition? I believe they did not.

Players like Javed Omar, Naimur Rahman, Akram Khan (who later flew to South Africa as a replacement for paceman Mashrafe bin-Mortuza) and Aminul Islam were overlooked. The management did not even bother to play the side's premier all-rounder Khaled Mahmud in the practice matches in Namibia and South Africa. When he was finally given a chance, Mahmud, known as the man for cranks, played his hearts out.

How could the team management drop someone like Mahmud who loves to perform under pressure? The selectors even had the audacity to

Quips & Quotes

FROM PAGE 13
to a day-time match.

"We challenged the Australians really closely when they played us in Bulawayo so we are hopeful that we can prove to everyone that we deserve to be in the Super Six."

Zimbabwe skipper Heath Streak looking ahead to his team's game with New Zealand on Saturday.

"I would like to carry on for a long while yet, I've got some unfinished business."

Nasser Hussain on his desire to stay on as captain of the England Test team.

Battle Within

FROM PAGE 13

during the group stages of the World Cup at an average of 24.67, three runs more than his career average of 21.44.

Flower averages 33.30 from 23 matches against New Zealand, almost two runs under his career one-day average of 35.18.

Bond took two wickets in New Zealand's 47-run defeat by Sri Lanka at Goodyear Park.

Flower has scored 2830 of his 6649 one-day runs at an average of 37.73 batting at number four for Zimbabwe. However, he has been batting at three during the World Cup.



PHOTO: STAR

Abahani skipper Akram Khan square-cuts one while Mohammedan's Sri Lankan wicketkeeper Romesh Kaluwitharana looks on during their GrameenPhone Premier Division Cricket League encounter at BKSP in Savar yesterday.

Cheeky Mohammedan win

Cricket

SPORTS REPORTER

Mohammedan Sporting Club triumphed in a nail-biting encounter against arch rivals Abahani to get back in the title race yesterday.

Mohammedan won by virtue of losing fewer number of wickets after scores were tied at the end of their GrameenPhone Premier Cricket League match at the Bangladesh Kriya Shikkha Protisthan (BKSP) ground in Savar.

Replying to Mohammedan's 185 for nine, Abahani lost their last wicket off the final ball of the stipulated 50 overs on 185.

Abahani had only themselves to blame for the defeat as they gave away two wickets in the last two balls of their innings when they could have won by playing out both deliveries. Number ten Suja Efran was run out in the penultimate ball while last batsman Alamgir Gazi was bowled in the next delivery of Mohammedan paceman Anwar Hossain Monir.

While all this was happening,

skipper Akram Khan, back in the team after his World Cup duties, was stranded at the other end on 67. Akram hit six boundaries in his 100-ball knock.

Apart from Akram, Pakistani recruit Tareq Mahmud scored 30 while opener Mehrab Hossain added 26.

Earlier, Mohammedan won the toss and batted first. One down Aftab Ahmed topscored for them with 39. Sri Lankan Test veteran Romesh Kaluwitharana and captain Minhazul Abedin with 32 were the other notable scorers.

It was Mohammedan's sixth win in nine matches. They moved into the second position in the league table with 36 points. They are still eight points behind leaders and defending champions Victoria Sporting Club.

For Abahani, the loss was their third in eight games. They stay fourth position with 30 points.

SCOREBOARD

Scoreboard of the GrameenPhone Premier Division Cricket League match between Abahani and Mohammedan at the BKSP ground

in Savar yesterday:

MOHAMMEDAN SC

Javed c Mukhter b Alamgir	14
Fahim c Mukhter b Russell	29
Aftab lbw b Suja	39
Kaluwitharana c Neeamur b T Mahmud	32
Naimur c Mukhter b T Mahmud	9
Minhazul not out	32
Enamul run out	1
Anwar run out	9
Hasibul run out	1
Arif & b T Mahmud	1
Monir not out	3
Extras: (b-1, lb-8, nb-4, w-2)	15
Total: (For 9 wks in 50 overs)	185
Fall of wickets: 1-30, 2-54, 3-106, 4-131, 5-131, 6-138, 7-162, 8-166, 9-169.	

Bowler	O	M	R	W
Russell	8	1	34	1
Alamgir	8	1	27	1
Arman	10	0	34	0
Suja	10	0	29	1
T Mahmud	8	1	29	3
Mehrab	6	0	23	0

Bowler	O	M	R	W
Hasibul	7	0	30	0
Monir	10	0	43	1
Fahim	10	0	31	2
Enamul	10	1	20	0
Naimur	10	0	42	1
Arif	3	0	18	0

Result: Mohammedan won for losing less number of wickets.

Mehrab c Enamul b Fahim	26
Sajjad run out	18
T Mahmud run out	30
Akram not out	67
Asadullahst Kaluwitharana b Arif	5
Neeamurst Kaluwitharana b Fahim	0
Arman run out	13
Mukhter run out	1
Russell b Naimur	3
Sujarun out	12
Alamgir b Monir	0
Extras: (lb-1, nb-1, w-8)	10
Total: (All out in 50 overs)	185

Bowler	O	M	R	W
Hasibul	7	0	30	0
Monir	10	0	43	1
Fahim	10	0	31	2
Enamul	10	1	20	0
Naimur	10	0	42	1
Arif	3	0	18	0

Result: Mohammedan won for losing less number of wickets.

History against NZ

ICC Cricket World Cup SOUTH AFRICA 2003

REUTERS, Bloemfontein

Recent history suggests New Zealand cannot afford any complacency against Zimbabwe in their opening World Cup Super Six match on Saturday.

On paper Zimbabwe are the easiest of New Zealand's three opponents in the second round. They are then scheduled to meet world champions Australia in Port Elizabeth, followed by India at Centurion.

Zimbabwe, however, have won both their last two one-day series against a New Zealand side who edged into the Super Sixes after forfeiting their match against Kenya in Nairobi and then losing their opening match against Sri Lanka.

By contrast, Heath Streak's side profited from England's refusal to play in Harare and grabbed two

Kiwis love

FROM PAGE 13
versatile cricketers who field like demons and regularly swap around the batting order.

For the first time in their history they can field a genuine expressman in Shane Bond, the Christchurch policeman who rattled the Australians in both one-dayers and Tests two seasons ago.

They do not, though, have a batsman commanding the stature of India's Sachin Tendulkar or Australian Adam Gilchrist, a player the rest of the team can bat around.

Nathan Astle has been their premier one-day player, but his record abroad has been inconsistent and he is struggling with chronic knee problems. Astle will play against Zimbabwe in Bloemfontein on Saturday although coach Denis Aberhart concedes he is at present a day-to-day proposition.

Waugh is no longer captain of the Australian one-day side and is currently pondering his Test future back home.

But his opposite number in Cardiff, the increasingly impressive Stephen Fleming, is back and, although only 29, is the most experienced captain in the world.

Fleming is innovative, thoughtful and meticulous in his preparation, as he showed when New Zealand almost stole a Test series of Australia in 2001.

His batting has not developed as anticipated, partially due to the pressures of taking over the captaincy at a tender age back in 1997.

This, though, might be about to

change at a crucial time for his country.

The tall, elegant left-hander has promoted himself to opener in the one-day game and worked hard at the nets before leaving New Zealand to develop his technique against the bouncer that is now permitted once an over.

He was rewarded with a splendid unbeaten century in the rain-shortened match against South Africa and looked a class player.

"The changes I've made technically are giving me a lot more confidence and everything is feeling very good," Fleming said. "It's not making a difference just for me, it's making a difference in terms of our entire batting unit."

Fleming and his team need to win at least two of their three second-phase matches to keep in contention for a semifinal spot.

One of them will be against the Australians in Port Elizabeth in four days' time, the ultimate test of their new unity and confidence.

When Sangakkara finally took a catch to remove Ponting, who topped a pull off Dilhara Fernando, Australia had cruised to 293 for three in the 46th over.

The Australian captain's 12th one-day century included eight boundaries and four sixes.

Damien Martyn helped himself to 52 off 51 balls to push Australia past the 300-run mark.

Fernando removed Martyn and Darren Lehmann in the final over to finish with 3-47.

Australia, already without the banned Shane Warne and the injured Jason Gillespie, took the field without Andrew Symonds who was nursing a thigh injury.

All-rounder Ian Harvey took his place.

Australia next play New Zealand at Port Elizabeth on Tuesday. Sri Lanka take on India at the Wanderers in Johannesburg on Monday.

SCOREBOARD

Scoreboard of the World Cup Super Sixes match between Australia and Sri Lanka at SuperSport Park on Friday:

AUSTRALIA	
Gilchrist run out	99
Hayden c Tillakaratne b M'tharan	22
Ponting c Sangakkara b Fernando	114
Martyn b Fernando	52
Lehmann c De Silva b Fernando	10
Harvey not out	5
Bevan not out	1
Extras: (lb-4, w-5, nb-7)	16
Total: (For 5 wks in 50 overs)	319

Sri Lanka, Lahore 1997/98

Sanath Jayasuriya Sri Lanka v India, Colombo 2001

Vangipurappu Laxman India v West Indies, Nagpur 2002/03

Graeme Smith S.Africa v Sri Lanka, Centurion 2002/03

Sanath Jayasuriya Sri Lanka v England, Adelaide 2002/03

Adam Gilchrist Australia v Sri Lanka, Centurion 2002/03

Adam Gilchrist Australia v Sri Lanka, Centurion 2002/03



GrameenPhone Premier Cricket League
Brothers Union v Surjo Tarun
Venue: FCS
City Club v Orient SC

Busy bookies

ICC Cricket World Cup SOUTH AFRICA 2003

INTERNET, Bombay

While India hoped to book passage to the cricket World Cup semifinal in its match against Kenya, bookies back home also were gearing up for the game crunched inside cars and huddled in vacant buildings.

Betting is banned in India, except at race courses in a few cities, but Indians are wild about cricket and many can't help but wager despite a police crackdown. Some 35 book-makers were arrested in Bombay and 24 in India's capital New Delhi last week.

News reports say some 40 billion rupees were bet on last week's India-Pakistan match and the stakes may rise as the World Cup semifinals approach.

Punters were itching to bet on whether India's star batsman Sachin Tendulkar would score a century against Kenya, how many Australians Sri Lanka's ace spinner Muttiah Muralitharan would nail, or

how the prolific Australian batsman Michael Bevan would fare in Super Six matches the same day.

"There has been an unprecedented hike in betting since the World Cup began. People have lost fortunes or made fortunes in the same evening," said Sridhar Vagal, Bombay's joint police commissioner.

Bombay bookies, who had earlier relegated India to fourth place, revised the odds after the exit of South Africa, Pakistan, the West Indies and England.

Australia remained the favourite. The bookies were giving bettors only 1 rupee for every 0.80 rupees they bet on the defending champions to win the World Cup.

Police recovered 10 mobile phones and four laptop computers from one car during a raid last week. But the laptops had access codes police found hard to crack.

The police don't get any information, and the raids just disrupt business, said one bookie, who runs a real estate agency and spoke on condition of anonymity.

And the punishment is light. Most bookies arrested in last week's raids

were out on bail after paying a fine of 1,000 rupees.

Although match-fixing remains a concern, police have found no recent evidence.

"Some of the big bookies in Bombay are linked to dons in Dubai and Karachi who fancy themselves as match-fixers," said Vagal, "but of late we have not found anything."

Police believe self-exiled mob boss Dawood Ibrahim, who tops India's most wanted list, is the biggest player in the Indian betting racket.

The big bookies monitor competitors' phone lines, foreign weather and become experts on the nature of the pitch, police say.

"I bet on it rain will stop play, if Sachin (Tendulkar) will make 50 or 100. The high in India is on these roving odds," said Ravi Tripathi, who also likes to put money down on horse racing.

"The big punters just have an open line with the bookie that stays open right through the match. The odds keep fluctuating, they change with every ball," said Tripathi, who refused to disclose his profession or the money he raked in during the World Cup.

Hussain aims to soldier on

Cricket

INTERNET, London

Nasser Hussain reiterated his determination to continue as England's Test captain as the World Cup team arrived at Heathrow Airport on Thursday.

Hussain wanted to captain England this summer, and will be available to tour Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and the West Indies next winter, whether or not he keeps his job as skipper.

He and was greeted with applause and a couple of shouts of 'Good old Nasser' from supporters.

Hussain faced the cameras and microphones, saying he was "just wanting to get home after five months away." He insisted he had no regrets about his decision to quit as one-day captain after England's elimination from the first stage of the World Cup.

"I had to play in both forms of cricket and captain both forms," he said. "I had five months away from home and you just can't do everything. A lot of that went into my decision."

"I don't like giving away any side,

but one-day cricket and me haven't got on very well recently. The reason I did it was to carry on as captain in the Test match arena. I made my decision through to the winter."

He refused to be drawn on the issue of who should succeed him as one-day captain. "It's nothing to do with me. It's up to the selectors to decide."

But he repeated that he hopes to continue as Test captain. "I would like to carry on for a long while yet, I've got some unfinished business," he added.

"My form has been very good. I want to get the Test side back to where it was in the past and my captaincy record speaks for itself. I would like to play 100 Tests, it's been an ambition of mine. Whether this is as captain or not is up to the selectors." Describing England's World Cup campaign as "frustrating", Hussain nonetheless wished Zimbabwe well for the rest of the competition and hoped their Test team would still come to England during the summer.

"I hope they have a good run in the World Cup. I wish them well for the rest of the tournament and I hope they come over here," he added.

"They have got Test matches at Durham and Lord's and I hope they come, I'm sure they will. We always play good Test matches against them and we get on well with their players. I hope we can continue our friendly rivalry against them."

Sri Lanka stops

REUTERS, Colombo

Friday is a normal working day, but Sri Lanka is coming to a halt.

While the country's cricket team faces Australia at the World Cup in South Africa television sets are being switched on in offices, beach-side shacks and thatched houses bordering paddy fields.

Those who do not own televisions cram into neighbours' homes.

Chris Perera, an executive in Colombo, said he was leaving the office early to watch Sri Lanka take on Australia in the Cup's second stage.

"I am getting together with a few colleagues even though we are supposed to be at work," he said, grinning.

Sri Lanka lifted the 1996 World Cup, making cricket addicts of much of the population.

It also helped the war-weary country forget, if only for a little while, the regular suicide bombings in the capital by Tamil Tiger rebels and the bloody battles between the army and the rebels that killed thousands.

Having been glued to television screens for the early stages of the cup, some Sri Lankan fans have their own theories about Friday's game and its impact.

"Strategically, we have to lose to Australia today so that we can beat them at the finals," said avid fan David Benedict.

"If we beat them today, we might not beat them at the finals."

Aussies surge into semis

FROM PAGE 13

successive sixes.

When Sangakkara finally took a catch to remove Ponting, who topped a pull off Dilhara Fernando, Australia had cruised to 293 for three in the 46th over.

The Australian captain's 12th one-day century included eight boundaries and four sixes.

Damien Martyn helped himself to 52 off 51 balls to push Australia past the 300-run mark.

Fernando removed Martyn and Darren Lehmann in the final over to finish with 3-47.

Australia, already without the banned Shane Warne and the injured Jason Gillespie, took the field without Andrew Symonds who was nursing a thigh injury.

All-rounder Ian Harvey took his place.

Australia next play New Zealand at Port Elizabeth on Tuesday. Sri Lanka take on India at the Wanderers in Johannesburg on Monday.

SCOREBOARD

Scoreboard of the World Cup Super Sixes match between Australia and Sri Lanka at SuperSport Park on Friday:

AUSTRALIA	
Gilchrist run out	99
Hayden c Tillakaratne b M'tharan	22
Ponting c Sangakkara b Fernando	114
Martyn b Fernando	52
Lehmann c De Silva b Fernando	10
Harvey not out	5
Bevan not out	1
Extras: (lb-4, w-5, nb-7)	16
Total: (For 5 wks in 50 overs)	319

Sri Lanka, Lahore 1997/98

Sanath Jayasuriya Sri Lanka v India, Colombo 2001

Vangipurappu Laxman India v West Indies, Nagpur 2002/03

Graeme Smith S.Africa v Sri Lanka, Centurion 2002/03

Sanath Jayasuriya Sri Lanka v England, Adelaide 2002/03

Adam Gilchrist Australia v Sri Lanka, Centurion 2002/03

Adam Gilchrist Australia v Sri Lanka, Centurion 2002/03