

WI out of Zim's reach

Cricket

AFP, Bulawayo

Centuries from Chris Gayle and Brian Lara set West Indies on the way to their second best score in one-day internationals as they ripped through Zimbabwe here on Saturday.

The two West Indians turned the first of a series of five matches into a batting display of the highest quality to help their side to 347-6.

Gayle and Lara put on 176 for the second wicket and scored 113 and 153 not out respectively.

The Windies total was just 13 runs short of the 360-4 they scored against Sri Lanka in a World Cup match in Karachi in 1987.

In reply, Zimbabwe struggled at first, but Vusi Sibanda and Craig Wishart enabled the home side to come up with a respectable 173-3 at the early close.

West Indies were calculated to have won the match by 51 runs under the Duckworth-Lewis system.

Gayle's return to form was impressive - he struck two sixes and 19 fours, using 158 balls in amassing his huge score.

Lara praised Gayle's "faultless" century and said how much he had enjoyed watching him play so well.

Told that his 18th one-day international century was a West Indies record, Lara replied modestly: "I don't think too much about things like that. It's so nice to be playing in good form."

But he added that Zimbabwe "did well in never giving up the fight."

Lara took command from the first ball he faced, lashing the Zimbabwe attack, which wilted badly at times, and lashed the bowlers to all parts of the ground.

This latest three figure innings by the West Indies captain required just 105 balls. He hit three skyscraper sixes and 14 fours, taking his aggregate in one-day international matches to 8,351 runs, more than double his nearest colleague, Shivnarine Chanderepaul.

Zimbabwe changed the tone of the lower part of the innings by capturing Chanderepaul, Ramnaresh Sarwan, Marlon Samuels and Ricardo Powell for only 31 runs between them.

But it made no difference to the West Indies momentum, which took them only marginally short of seven runs an over and to their second highest total.

Zimbabwe, in reply, lost Trevor Gripper for 16 and Mark Vermeulen first ball, both victims of Gayle.

But Sibanda, with a maiden half-century and Wishart, the most reliable of the Zimbabwe batsmen, defied the

West Indies with a spirited 110 runs partnership for the third wicket. They made 58 and 72 not out respectively, giving Zimbabwe hopes for the second encounter on Sunday, as captain Heath Streak noted.

"With that in mind I think we still have a good chance of squaring the series tomorrow. We must think and act more positively and with the will to win" he said.

SCOREBOARD

Scoreboard of the first of the five-match one-day series against Zimbabwe on Saturday:

WEST INDIES: 347 for 6 in 50 overs (Gayle 153, Lara 113)

ZIMBABWE

| | |
|----------------------------------|-----|
| Sibanda c Powell b Drakes | 58 |
| Gripper c Lara b Gayle | 16 |
| Vermeulen c Chanderepaul b Gayle | 0 |
| Wishart not out | 72 |
| Blignaut not out | 10 |
| Extras: (lb-2, nb-11, w-4) | 17 |
| Total: (For 3 wks in 34.5 overs) | 173 |

Fall of wickets: 1-40, 2-40, 3-150

| Bowler | O | M | R | W |
|---------|-----|---|----|---|
| Dillon | 7.5 | 0 | 52 | 0 |
| Drakes | 4 | 0 | 15 | 1 |
| Samuels | 6 | 0 | 22 | 0 |
| Gayle | 10 | 1 | 21 | 2 |
| Sarwan | 3 | 0 | 23 | 0 |
| Rampaul | 4 | 0 | 38 | 0 |

Result: West Indies won by 51 runs (D/L method) and lead series 1-0. Man-of-the-match: Chris Gayle.

France clinch Fed Cup

AFP, Moscow

Amelie Mauresmo guided France to Fed Cup victory here on Sunday with a 6-2, 6-1 win in an hour over American Meghann Shaughnessy, which gave the French an unbeatable 3-0 lead in the best-of-five final.

It is the second Fed Cup title for the French who last won the trophy in 1997 against the Netherlands, and their first win over the United States in eleven meetings between the two countries.

French number one Mauresmo and teammate Mary Pierce had given France a 2-0 overnight lead by beating Lisa Raymond 6-4, 6-3, and Shaughnessy 6-3, 6-6, 8-6 respectively.

The US team, without their top players including Venus and Serena Williams, had been bidding for an 18th Fed Cup title, and included veteran Martina Navratilova in their lineup.

The 47-year-old, who first played Fed Cup for Czechoslovakia in 1975, remains unbeaten in 38 games and lines out later in the doubles.

On Saturday, Mauresmo and Pierce moved France to within one point of their first ever Fed Cup win over the United States with a 2-0 lead after the first day.

French number one Mauresmo claimed the first match against Lisa Raymond 6-4, 6-3, and Pierce later rallied to a sensational 6-3, 3-6, 8-6 victory over American number one Meghann Shaughnessy.

Mauresmo showed the kind of form which saw her win in Philadelphia, and reach the finals in Moscow and Los Angeles, needing one hour 16 minutes to see off her 30-year-old opponent.

But the 24-year-old was pushed all the way by 28th-ranked Raymond, who broke to lead 3-1 in the second set, before Mauresmo broke back, to begin a run of five games.

Pierce, who has not played Fed Cup since she helped France to their only title in 1997 against the Netherlands, struggled against 17th-ranked Shaughnessy before holding firm in a marathon two hours 23 min tie.

Watch out

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attacks was successful.

"We really fought a historical win. Our players did not run out of energy, they were unified even when the result was 0-1 and 0-2 in favour of Turkey."

Starkovs, who played in the former Soviet Republic first division between 1975 and 1989 and took over as Latvia manager in May 2001, believes Latvia's success is founded on a well-balanced mix of experience and youth.

"We have very experienced players such as 32-year-old Vitalijs Astafjavs and 33-year-old Michail Zemlinskis. And we have players like Andrejs Rubins, Imants Bleidelis, Igors Stepanovs and Aleksandrs Kolinko, at their best age between 25 and 28."

"And, of course, we have very talented young players, for instance our attacker Maris Verpakovskis who is 24," he said.

Windies defend

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which there was no prior consultation, and have made our views known very clearly to the WICB."

England will play four Tests in Jamaica, Trinidad, Barbados and Antigua and seven one-day internationals during the tour which lasts until May 5.

The WICB has appointed New Century Marketing to sell tickets in England, but prices will be cheaper if supporters wait to buy them in the Caribbean.

Braithwaite insisted the WICB was not guilty of "profiteering" and said advance sales indicated the tour would be as well supported as in the past.

He added: "We value the support of all cricket fans and we are hard at work with the territorial boards and our tourism partners in the region to welcome large numbers to the series next year."

West Indies officials plan to use the extra revenue generated to improve facilities ahead of the 2007 World Cup, which will be played in the Caribbean.

Zimbabwe level

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Gripper 6 1 28 2

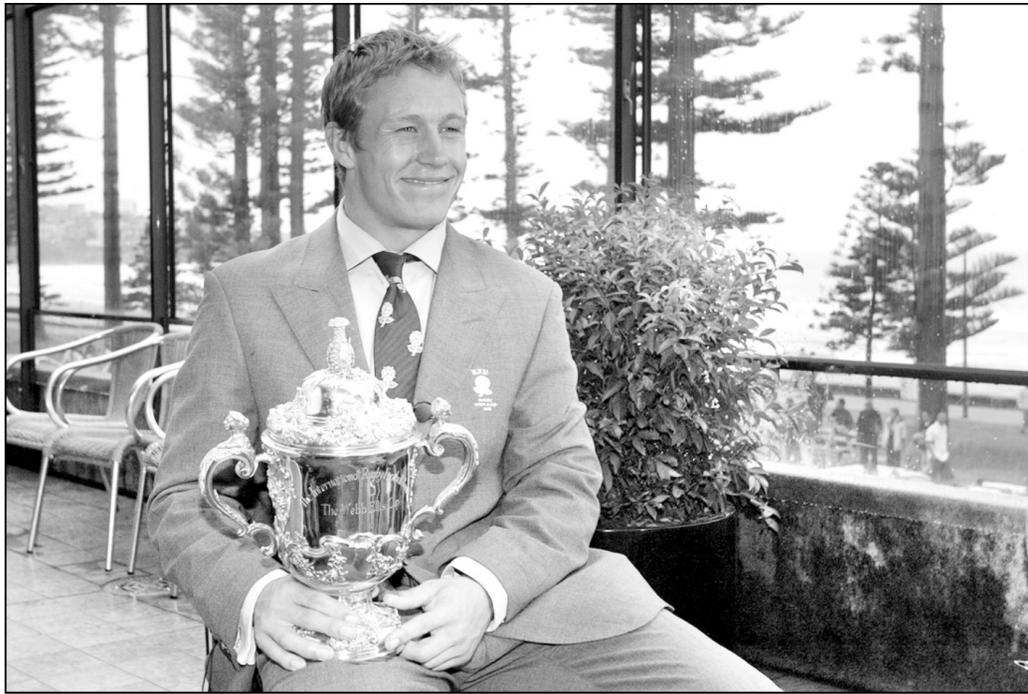
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|----------------------------------|-----|
| Sibanda c Baugh b Drakes | 0 |
| Gripper run out (Samuels) | 6 |
| Vermeulen not out | 66 |
| Wishart c Sarwan b Collymore | 8 |
| Matsikenyeri b Collymore | 3 |
| Streak not out | 38 |
| Extras: (lb-1, nb-4, w-2) | 7 |
| Total: (For 4 wks in 29.4 overs) | 128 |

Fall of wickets: 1-8, 2-8, 3-31, 4-54

Did not bat: Blignaut, Ervine, Taibu, Price, Brent

| Bowler | O | M | R | W |
|-----------|-----|---|----|---|
| Rampaul | 10 | 2 | 47 | 0 |
| Drakes | 7 | 2 | 18 | 1 |
| Collymore | 7 | 1 | 27 | 2 |
| Gayle | 3 | 1 | 16 | 0 |
| Samuels | 2 | 0 | 10 | 0 |
| Sarwan | 0.4 | 0 | 9 | 0 |

Result: Zimbabwe won by 6 wickets and level the series 1-1. Man-of-the-match: Mark Vermeulen.



England's Jonny Wilkinson gives a television interview holding the Rugby World Cup at the team's hotel yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

Awaiting Woodward's wonders

AFP, London



England's World Cup-winning rugby team is set for a heroes' welcome when they return from Australia on Tuesday.

Jonny Wilkinson kicked England to a 20-17 victory over Australia in Sydney with a drop goal in the final second of extra-time.

And plans are underway to honour coach Clive Woodward's team who arrive at Heathrow airport Tuesday at 5 am (0500 GMT), with the Webb Ellis Trophy on board in its own seat at the front of the plane.

A victory celebration through the streets of London and an official reception by Prime Minister Tony Blair at Downing Street are among the options

being considered.

"We have been talking to the RFU to see how we could mark their efforts. A reception is obviously one of the things we are talking to them about," a spokesman for the Prime Minister said.

And Rugby Football Union (RFU) chief executive Francis Baron confirmed Sunday that an England XV will tackle the New Zealand Barbarians at Twickenham on December 20.

The fixture, which will not be an official Test match, has been ratified by the International Rugby Board.

The Barbarians side are likely to include players from throughout the southern hemisphere, and will be their second visit to Twickenham after they beat England in 1996.

The RFU are expecting a capacity crowd for what is an extra game before England launch their Six Nations defence against Italy in Rome on February 15.

Londoners flocked to pubs early Saturday to watch the game, shouting

madly when Wilkinson won the day.

"We're here to support our country," Nicki Percy explained to The Observer newspaper amongst the "sweaty, heaving, steaming Orange Tree pub" in well-heeled Richmond, southwest London.

Fellow female rugby fan Kirsten Clare was crying as she exploded: "I can't believe it! I can't believe it! It's almost too much to bear."

The Prime Minister, relaxing after US President George W. Bush's state visit to London this past week, watched the game at his country residence Chequers.

"This was a fantastic day for English rugby and for England," Blair said afterwards.

"The team can be proud of their performance, their spirit and above all their character. It was a victory they worked for and the whole country can be proud of them."

London-based Sunday papers waxed lyrical about England's win.

"Champions of the world," trumpeted The Sunday Times. "Wilkinson wins it," crowed The Sunday Telegraph. "England on top of the world," agreed The Observer.

The top-selling News of the World put it all in perspective.

"After Maradona's Hand of God, Gazza's tears, the '91 Rugby World Cup, Euro '96, Becks' sending off, cricket (usually), Wimbledon (always) and years of Aussie gloating - yesterday this Jonny Wilkinson kick finally put us on ... Drop Of The World!"

Images of the unassuming 24-year-old Wilkinson - whose mother was out shopping as the game was played -- was splashed across the front page of virtually every Sunday newspaper.

"God really is an Englishman!" said The Mail on Sunday, while in the Sunday Express the message was simply: "Wonder Wilko out of this world."

Gazza's advice for Rooney

AFP, Liverpool

Fallen star Paul Gascoigne warned teenage sensation Wayne Rooney on Friday not to put his career at risk by bidding an early farewell to hometown club Everton.

Former England international Gascoigne, who left his roots at Newcastle as a 21-year-old for Tottenham in 1988 before his career eventually went into freefall, believes 17-year-old Rooney should not be tempted by speculation linking him with a big-money move to Chelsea.

"At his age, he's definitely got to stay with Everton," said Gascoigne, now 36, and trying to rebuild his career with Wolves.

"He's got to be because sometimes you look at the likes of Joe Cole and Damien Duff, who moved to Chelsea in the summer, and they are getting a game every other week.

"At Everton, he's getting well looked after and it looks like he's getting a decent pay packet. He should stick to his roots."

Javed eyes a clean sweep

Cricket

REUTERS, Karachi

Pakistan coach Javed Miandad is targeting a clean sweep of New Zealand in the five-match one-day series starting next week.

"We will give all respect to New Zealand as any international team demands. But we must not look for anything short of a 5-0 sweep," Miandad told this news agency on Sunday.

A new look New Zealand squad, including seven players without any one-day international experience, arrives in Lahore on Friday for matches in Lahore, Faisalabad and Rawalpindi.

The New Zealand selectors were forced to announce the inexperienced squad after Craig McMillan, Scott Styris, Lou Vincent and Ian Butler pulled out of the tour due to security concerns. Captain Stephen Fleming,



JAVED MIANDAD

batsman Nathan Astle and fast bowler Shane Bond were ruled out with injuries.

Miandad warned his players against complacency.

"We didn't even take Bangladesh lightly and we are not going to take this New Zealand side easy either. Limited-overs cricket is very unpredictable and it takes one good performance to turn the match upside down," he said.



PHOTO: AFP

Members of the French Fed Cup team pose together after winning the final against United States in Moscow yesterday.

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

- ACROSS
- 1 Help on a heist
- 5 USN rank
- 8 Breaches
- 12 Mad king of literature
- 13 WWE surface
- 14 Enticement
- 15 Brazilian rubber
- 16 Figure head? (Abbr.)
- 17 Press agent?
- 18 Soda-shoppe treat
- 20 Carnival attraction
- 22 Square
- 26 Comic Mandel
- 29 Approvals
- 30 Praiseful verse
- 31 Victor's announcement
- 32 Wall climber
- 33 Regimen
- 34 Author Tolstoy
- 35 Bullring bravo
- 36 Rotates
- 37 Historical fraternity
- 40 Telegram
- 41 Rowling hero
- 45 Street urchin
- 47 Obtain
- 49 Comic-strip possum
- 50 Dermatology case
- 51 Idolater's emotion (Abbr.)
- 52 Com-motions
- 53 Cincinnati squad
- 54 Blazed the trail
- 55 Inquisitive
- 24 Paradise
- 25 Trawler gear
- 26 Hawaiian city
- 27 Unpaid
- 28 Bassoon, often for instance
- 32 Against the rules
- 33 Broom accessory
- 35 "the ramparts ..."
- 36 Seesaw quorum
- 38 Drums'
- 38 accompaniment, maybe
- 39 Made up one's mind
- 42 "What am I going -- now?"
- 43 Hollywood clasher
- 44 Optimistic
- 45 1940s headline subject
- 46 Royal flush member
- 48 Flock female

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| 45 | 46 | | | | | 47 | 48 | | 49 | |
| 50 | | | | | | 51 | | | 52 | |
| 53 | | | | | | 54 | | | 55 | |

CRYPTOQUIP

S A N K Z A D H I J G K D X H
S X N F P M N X F C G D P J P
T Y X J G Y F M R , J P ' F P X Y M R D
C X J I I J K C I N X T G X H D K Z N

Yesterday's Cryptquip: TWO MAD BIRDS FOUND FIGHTING IN A TREE; NEWSPAPER HEADLINE READS "BOUT ON A LIMB!" Today's Cryptquip Clue: I equals P

The Cryptquip is a substitution cipher in which one letter stands for another. If you think that X equals O, it will equal O throughout the puzzle. Single letters, short words and words using an apostrophe give you clues to locating vowels. Solution is by trial and error.

For rich men only

Golf

AFP, Beijing

In China golf has a reputation for being a sport only for the super-rich, and government policies make sure it remains a millionaire's hobby.

Golf courses pay 20 percent in corporate income tax, compared with only three percent for stadiums and other sports venues, pushing up charges for golf club memberships and green fees.

"Everything is priced prohibitively for most people," said Ian Stirling, client manager for the Asian Golf Division at sports management agency IMG.

"It's becoming more affordable, but not as affordable as it could be."

China probably has anywhere between 300,000 and one million golfers, according to the China Golf Association.

That is up from zero less than two decades ago. China's first golf course opened only in 1984.

The number of Chinese golf players is likely to rise by more than 20 percent this year, but the growth rate could be much higher than that if only prices started coming down.

"If money was no concern, everybody would love this game," said Zhang Jianhong, an editor at Golf Magazine, a Chinese-language monthly with a circulation that has increased 12-fold in three years to 62,000.

"But it's still too expensive for ordinary people."

At Golf Shop, a newly opened Beijing investment by Taiwan-based golf equipment retailer Dacom International Co, customers typically wear fancy suits and have people carry their bags.

"Many of our customers are company bosses, and we've also had a few celebrities, like movie stars and TV anchors," said Lin Xiaoxia, a saleswoman at the shop.

"Other people mostly just come to look around."

Window-shopping is likely to remain widespread as long as a lifetime golf club membership may cost a million yuan (120,000 dollars). It would take an average urban resident 130 years to accumulate that amount.

Cutting the steep income tax on golf courses could help bring prices within reach of millions of Chinese, but that is unlikely to happen soon.

This is because golf courses are

categorized as entertainment venues along with bars and karaoke lounges. Football stadiums and tennis courts are considered cultural venues and pay a sixth of the rates.

There is an ingrained perception among the communist leadership that golf is a slightly decadent capitalist pastime that should not be encouraged, observers say.

Government officials, who made up the first wave of golf players 20 years ago, have been targeted by a series of "restrictions," said Domenico Palumbo, business development manager at Luhu Golf and Country Club in south China.

It is not just the communist party leadership that is prejudiced against golf.

During the mass protests in Tiananmen Square in 1989, students chided Communist party chief Zhao Ziyang for spending time on the golf course, alleging it was evidence he was corrupt.

Since then, no Chinese political leader has been seen playing golf in

public, opting for more proletarian pastimes.

Marking the limits of the acceptable, Wu Bangguo, the head of parliament, has been described as an avid tennis player in the state-controlled media. Late paramount leader Deng Xiaoping played bridge.

Steep taxes are not the only ways the Chinese government squeezes the country's golf industry.

The Cabinet is hatching plans for an agency with nationwide reach that will control the spread of golf courses, which are currently estimated at 200.

"That's likely to mean stricter curbs on the construction of new golf courses," said Song Liangliang, deputy secretary general of the China Golf Association.

"It won't just be up to the local governments to give the green light for new projects."

While the government seems to have decidedly cool feelings towards golf, in the long run it may be impossible to rein in public interest in the

sport.

In an age and a place where wealth is flaunted rather than hidden from view, golf's status as an aspirational sport makes it attractive.

"Image is very important," said John Cappel, IMG's Shanghai-based managing director for Greater China.

"It's mainly a statement. People need to be able to say, 'I have a golf club membership'. It's like driving a very nice car."

But until policies change, the golf industry will have to rely on enthusiasts like Zhang Jun, an entrepreneur visiting a golf equipment shop in downtown Beijing.

He only just started playing and has thought about joining a golf club, he explained, as he tested a 20,000-yuan (2,400-dollar) golf club with aggressive swings.

"I'm busy, so time could be a problem," he said. "Money isn't."