



Did U Know?

South Africa scored 438-9 in the fifth and final ODI against Australia at the New Wanderers Stadium on March 12. It was the highest score ever in an ODI match beating the 434-4 scored by Australia in the previous innings of the same match.



Rahul Dravid

(India cricket captain)
"Being captain is something I'm enjoying. It was terrific, I'm really proud of the boys."
After beating England in the second Test.

Kenyans hungry for exposure

Cricket

SPORTS REPORTER

World Cup semifinalists Kenya arrived in the capital Tuesday morning to play four one-day internationals against Bangladesh this month.

The battle of the two sides used to create much hype but it is not the case these days since Bangladesh's entry into the highest level of the game. And that is the reason there is hardly any ardour with the four-match series.

With Bangladesh enjoying international commitments on regular basis, the East Africans are still crying for recognition.

That is why Kenyan captain Steve Tikolo said that they are hungry for playing international cricket rather than being concerned about results.

"We are really hungry to play international cricket. We have had very little opportunities to play international games since our commendable performance in the last World Cup. We are hoping that our lack of exposure would be taken under consideration by the world cricket governing body," said Tikolo, a popular cricketer in the Bangladesh domestic circuit.

Coach Roger Harper, the former West Indies international and coach who took over the ICC associate members at the end of January, also echoed the same sentiment.

"Kenya do not get enough opportunity to play international cricket, so

we are happy that we've got the chance to play a few games after four matches against Zimbabwe. We need more international exposure," explained Harper.

Despite having a good record against Bangladesh, Tikolo, who has played all seven ODIs against Bangladesh with an enviable batting record including a century in Dhaka in 1999, branded his side as underdogs in the coming series. "No doubt Bangladesh are favourites. This is my second home as I have been playing domestic cricket here for the last few years. It is a privilege to see almost all the Bangladeshi players and it gives me an impression that Bangladesh are an improving lot," the 34-year-old said.

"Yes, I know the players and very much familiar with the condition but mind it, domestic and international cricket is not the same thing. You have to play tough in international cricket. We have a very good record against Bangladesh but I must say it is totally a new series," he added.

Tikolo, the highest scorer with 800-plus runs in the recently concluded Premier Cricket League, agreed that they will feel the absence of ex-Kenya captain Maurice Odumbe, banned from international cricket for match-fixing.

"Definitely he was one of our key players and we are also missing Ravindu Shah for knee injury. But young guys are very much focusing on the series and are hungry to show their best. There are some new players who have the talent to put pressure on the opponents,"

said a confident Tikolo, a genuine match winner.

"We should have won 3-1 in Zimbabwe but cricket is such a game where one ball can change the whole scenario of the match," said Tikolo, who was unsatisfied with the 2-2 draw in Zimbabwe. His scores were 23, 98, 9 and two.

Although the soft-spoken Tikolo did not want to make much of his involvement in Bangladesh cricket, coach Harper believed that it would make a huge impact in the series.

"Our captain knows the condition and the players and I believe it will help us. You will recognise some young faces. Which impressed me most is the enthusiasm among the cricketers about the tour. We came here to play good and competitive cricket," said the tall off-spinner and a spectacular fielder in his days, who had earlier visited the country twice.

Kenya will leave Dhaka this morning for Bogra while the Bangladesh team left yesterday to play the first game on March 17 at the Shaheed Chandu Stadium.

SQUAD

Tikolo (Captain), Thomas Odoyo, Martin Suji, Kennedy Otieno, Otiemo Suji, Peter Jimmy, Hitesh Modi, David Obuya, Collins Obuya, Alfred Luseno, Morris Ouma, Kalpesh Patel, James Kabatha and Tanmay Mishra.



NICE TO SEE YOU AGAIN: The Kenyan national team, who arrived in Dhaka yesterday after nearly seven years to play four one-day internationals against the Tigers, is seen checking in at Sonargaon Hotel in the morning.

Cruciani's boys start camp at BKSP

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh national football team will prepare at home for next month's AFC Challenge Cup as their proposed trip to Thailand was cancelled.

Coach Diego Cruciani wanted to take the team abroad for two weeks but the Bangladesh Football Federation and its National Team Management Committee finally shelved the idea due to lack of fund.

The Argentine coach, who refused to have the camp at BKSP for lack of facilities, finally went to the Savar sport institute where the residential camp began yesterday with 26 booters.

The 16-nation meet will be held in Dhaka and Chittagong from April 1-16.

Flintoff reflects on collapse

REUTERS, Mohali

Andrew Flintoff lamented the second innings collapse that helped India win the second test in Mohali on Monday, but said England's performances on the tour hinted at a bright future.

"I don't think you could have asked for anything more," said Flintoff, who is leading the side in the absence of the injured Michael Vaughan.

"We have shown signs in this game we can compete with India," he added. "This side fights hard."

England were down to 112 for five overnight before being all out for 181 on the final morning, leaving India needing only 144 runs for victory on Monday.

"Losing five wickets in the last session last night, it is tough to come back from that position," he said.

"It was by no means impossible with myself and (Geraint) Jones at the crease, we always thought we

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Sarwan to miss series

NZ keep the faith

Cricket

AFP, Auckland

The West Indies suffered a further setback Tuesday, a day after losing the first cricket Test to New Zealand, with confirmation that vice-captain and leading batsman Ramnaresh Sarwan has been ruled out of the rest of the tour.

Sarwan had failed to recover from a pulled thigh muscle suffered during the one-day series, a team spokesman said.

He scored two half-centuries in the one-dayers, and 62 in the first innings of the opening Test, before being felled by a Shane Bond bouncer that smashed into the back of his helmet during the second innings.

He left the field for an extended break, only to return briefly, but did not suffer any side effects from that knock.

No replacement player will be sought and his place is expected to go to Runako Morton with Devon Smith another option.

His withdrawal follows West Indies coach Bennett King confirming on Monday that fast bowler Jerome Taylor was struggling with a hamstring strain and was unlikely to feature in the second Test in Wellington starting on Friday.

King now faces a big task to haul his squad back into contention. They left the first Test slip from their grasp after being well placed at 183 for three on the fourth day, chasing a target of 291.

Instead, a middle-order collapse triggered by New Zealand fast bowler Shane Bond led to the West Indies losing by 27 runs.

"I think we didn't play moments well, and we created a lot of moments to take the Test," said King whose side have now lost 14 of their last 16 Tests.

"Over the time that I've been here, I certainly think we've improved and progressed in different areas and we're creating opportunities to win games."



RAMNARESH SARWAN

"For whatever reasons we didn't handle them the right way. I can probably target about 10 moments I thought were significant," he said.

King felt they could still test New Zealand in Wellington with positives coming from the century opening stand between Chris Gayle and Daren Ganga in the second innings of the first Test, while fast bowler

Fidel Edwards created enough heat to trouble New Zealand on many occasions.

New Zealand captain Stephen Fleming said they knew West Indies weren't used to winning, so the longer they remained in the match, there was a good chance of victory.

"Whatever happened we were going to make it as tough as possible for West Indies to get those runs. It may not have looked like that at 138 without loss, but we were desperate to hang on for as long as possible and expose them to the pressure of the moment."

"When we did grab some ascendancy in that final innings we dominated for once. The game had been screaming out for it and we were good enough to rise to it eventually."

Meanwhile, the New Zealand cricket selectors have kept faith with their novice top order who struggled in the first Test against the West Indies, saying Tuesday they will play again in the second Test.

Jamie How, Hamish Marshall and Peter Fulton were back in the pavilion after only 54 runs had been scored in the first innings and 73 runs in the second of the Auckland match, which the home side won.

Marshall struggled as an opener with scores of 11 and one after playing his previous nine Tests at number three.

Coach John Bracewell described all three as "young and inexperienced". While they were in the line-

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Aussie gamblers rue their luck

AFP, Sydney

Australian gamblers re-learned an old lesson along with the nation's cricketers in this week's record breaking one-day international in Johannesburg: there's no such thing as a certainty.

The odds were not attractive. Two of the gamblers bet 20,000 dollars each with Centrebet at 1.01 to one for the chance to win just 200 dollars.

The third put 16,000 dollars on with Sportsbook.com.au at 1.06 to one, hoping to make 960 dollars. All lost when South Africa romped home with one ball to spare.

"I almost didn't bother putting the odds up between innings," Centrebet's Gerard Daffy told the Sydney Morning Herald.

"I didn't think anyone would be interested. It just goes to show again, there's no such thing as a certainty. It's what keeps bookmakers in business."

Nobody backed South Africa at Centrebet's odds of 26 to one. At that price, 20,000 dollars would have earned a cool 520,000 dollars.

'Eng need to bat better'

Cricket

SPORTINGLIFE, undated

Former England batsman Geoff Boycott insists the team must substantially improve their batting if they are to rescue the Test series against India.

England lost the second Test yesterday by nine wickets in Mohali and have just one opportunity to level the series in the final game next week in Mumbai.

Captain Andrew Flintoff led by example scoring 70 and 51 but only Kevin Pietersen (64), Geraint Jones (52) and Ian Bell (57) of the other batsmen offered any meaningful contributions as the team were bowled out for 300 in the first innings before slumping to 181 all out in the second.

Now Boycott is calling for the batsmen to make considerable improvements.

Boycott told Radio Five Live: "We need to win the batting and I don't think we do."

"I think we need to bat better. 'Somebody has got to make 100 each match. I only feel Pietersen and Flintoff are really going to dictate terms and that is the difference."

Boycott, who made his last appearance for England on tour in

India in 1982, believes the batsmen are making too many errors giving an impression they are about to capitulate.

He wrote in his column in the Daily Telegraph: "Too many batsmen either made silly mistakes or batted nicely for a time and then

"We don't have enough quality at the moment. People like Andrew Strauss are playing too many big shots and making too many mistakes."

"Individuals need to start making bigger scores and someone has to go on and make a hundred."

The Yorkshire legend did however reserve praise for skipper Flintoff.

"I thought that Andrew Flintoff batted absolutely superbly in both innings and showed how England should be playing (bowler Anil) Kumble by getting a big strike in and getting forward."

England coach Duncan Fletcher, however, refused to be too downhearted and pointed to the absence of Michael Vaughan, Marcus Trescothick, Simon Jones and Ashley Giles as a key factor.

Fletcher told Sky Sports: "It's a huge hole in your side when you lose four of your top players and they are at full strength."

"When you turn around and look at it and say what would happen if we had our full side and you took their top four players out and they were lacking that experience?"

"You get these inconsistencies due to most of the time, not all the time, it's the experience you are missing and we missed that experience in the Test match."

England's batting always looks capable of self-destructing. We have people who flatter to deceive and who are not solid enough.

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Scottish diver Monique McCarroll hones her skill at the Melbourne Aquatic Centre on Tuesday, a day before the 18th Commonwealth Games begin in the bustling Australian city today.

C'wealth Games open today

Sex scandal rocks preparations

AFP, Melbourne

Melbourne's Commonwealth Games preparations were thrown into disarray Tuesday when a sex scandal rocked the lead-up to the 71-nation event just 24 hours before the opening ceremony.

After a decade meticulously planning a sporting extravaganza to be watched by a worldwide TV audience estimated at 1.5 billion people, officials in Australia's second largest city were unable to prevent controversy hijacking the event.

Victoria state police commissioner Christine Nixon confirmed her officers were investigating allegations a 16-year-old girl was indecently assaulted by a 28-year-old man while she was working as a cleaner in the Games village.

Nixon said the man, who Indian officials confirmed was a masseur in their delegation, could face up to two years jail if convicted. She said the man's passport had been confiscated while police conduct their investigation.

Victoria state Commonwealth Games Minister Justin Madden said controversies were inevitable in a Games village containing 6,000 people drawn from all over the world.

"It's the equivalent of a real city, so of course you expect incidents or issues that are comparable to any demographic of 6,000 people," he told reporters.

Madden preferred to discuss Melbourne's preparations for what he pledged would be the most spectacular Commonwealth Games ever staged in its 76-year history.

"The city is absolutely bursting with excitement," he said. "The city is presenting itself absolutely magnificently, we've got a record number of attendees ... there's an enormous sense of anticipation."

Melbourne has undergone a 1.1 billion dollar (815 million US) facelift for the Games, with 434 million spent on refurbishing the Melbourne Cricket Ground (MCG), the spiritual home of Australian sport.

Ceremony organiser Andrew Walsh promised some surprises when Queen Elizabeth II officially opens the Games in front of an MCG crowd of about 80,000 people on Wednesday night.

Images have already leaked out of the ceremony featuring a winged Melbourne tram suspended over the stadium and giant mechanical fish along Melbourne's Yarra River.

However, Walsh said organisers had managed to hold back a few show-stopping secrets for the night.

"It's a ceremony that is not necessarily typical of ceremonies that have gone before," he said, "It's much more aspirational in its design, it's very contemporary."

The opening ceremony will mark the arrival of the Queen's Baton at the MCG after a 180,000 kilometre (112,000 mile) journey around the globe that took it to all 71 Commonwealth nations, most of which are former British colonies.

"The Queen's Baton is about generating enthusiasm for the Games ... it's about the unsung

heroes who are given a chance to carry the Baton," Madden said.

Nixon said the Queen's presence meant there would be high security at the MCG for the opening ceremony.

Some 2,500 heavily armed military personnel will join 13,000 Victoria state police and about 5,000 private security guards protecting Games' venues and participants.

Warplanes will enforce a 75-kilometre (45-mile) exclusion zone in airspace around the city to prevent a September 11 style attack, while police on the ground have been given extra stop-and-search powers.

Melbourne 2006 chairman Ron Walker said the Games were a defining moment for the sports-mad city of 3.6 million people, with the event's scale surpassing the 1956 Olympics hosted at the same venue.

"This is the accumulation of

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