

Smith hails his boys

Woolmer says long way to go before WC



AGENCIES, undated

Captain Graeme Smith hailed South Africa's character after qualifying for the Champions Trophy semifinals with a 124-run hammering of Pakistan on Friday.

"Justin Kemp and Mark Boucher stood up and showed a lot of character," Smith told reporters. "That is what this team is about and they epitomised that."

Wicketkeeper Boucher (69) and all rounder Kemp (64) put on 131 for the sixth wicket to rescue South Africa after slumping to 42 for five on a seaming pitch after winning the toss.

Strike bowler Makhaya Ntini then captured five for 21, his second best one-day international figures, to skittle Pakistan for 89.

The Proteas topped Group B by virtue of a better net run-rate ahead of fellow qualifiers New Zealand.

South Africa plays in the second semifinal in Jaipur on Thursday against the Group A runners-up.

World champions Australia play hosts India in the must-win final Group A league tie in Mohali on Sunday to decide the second qualifier alongside title holders West Indies.

Smith expressed surprise at the lively Mohali pitch.

"Even in South Africa you don't get too many wickets that do as much as that," he said.

"But even on a track like this we had to bowl the ball in the right areas. I thought Pakistan did it

superbly up front but we were just terrific in the field."

He praised Ntini for slicing through the early batting.

"If they had got off to a good start, it would have been difficult," said Smith.

He added that it was important to take early wickets bowling under the lights before the dew set in.

"The dew is still there," he said. "The key is how well we bowl before it makes an impact."

Pakistan coach Bob Woolmer criticised his batsmen for letting down the team after excellent work by the bowlers led by pacemen Umar Gul, who took three for 36 and Rao Iftikhar (2-26).

"A defeat like this is disappointing, we are disappointed for the Pakistan public," he said. "We let them down."

"Our batting was abject," he said. "Our fielding and bowling was excellent."

Pakistan were reduced to 27 for six in 10 overs, after a top order slump also led to Wednesday's 51-run defeat against New Zealand.

"Winning the toss on this pitch, chasing or whatever is a bit of a lottery," said Woolmer. "It will be interesting to see the Australia versus India pitch when they play."

"We need to learn to play on these types of pitches," he said. "Our players play a lot away from the body."

He however insisted he still had plenty of time to get Pakistan "back on track" for the World Cup following their exit from the Champions Trophy.

Pakistan's preparation for the tournament could hardly have been worse with skipper Inzamamul Haq absent because of

a four-match ban and Shoaib Akhtar and Mohammad Asif sent home after failing a drugs test.

But they began encouragingly with a four-wicket win over in-form Sri Lanka, only to lose to New Zealand in their second game after allowing the Kiwis to score 99 off the final 10 overs of their innings.

Then again his batsmen failed to show the technique and resolve to cope with South Africa's pace attack.

"Our game plan was to get to 20 overs by leaving the ball, playing a Test match innings. But if that's a Test match innings, I don't want to play Test cricket," Woolmer commented.

"It was one of those pitches, if you got your lengths right, it was very difficult to play -- the ball nipped around and took the edge of the bat."

"Pressure does get to you, and (sometimes) you can't relieve it. It did go sideways and it was difficult but I'm not making any excuses. We batted poorly."

Woolmer praised his side for a "brave effort" in the face of adverse circumstances prior to the tournament, and backed them to raise their game for the World Cup in the Caribbean.

"Conditions will be very different there and we've got two series (before then), 10 more one-day internationals, so there's plenty of time to get us back on track," he added.

Younis joins Yorkshire

AFP, Leeds

Pakistan batsman Younis Khan is to join Yorkshire on a one-year contract for the 2007 English season, the English county announced Friday.

The 28-year-old, currently captaining his country in the ICC Champions Trophy in India, will become the county's first Pakistani player when he joins in April, after next year's World Cup in the Caribbean.

Younis told Yorkshire's official website, www.yorkshirecc.com: "I know that players like Michael Vaughan and Matthew Hoggard play at Yorkshire, and also legends such as Geoffrey Boycott and Sir Leonard Hutton played there."

"It will be an honour to follow these cricketers, and play at Headingley Carnegie."

Younis has already enjoyed success at the Leeds ground, winning the man-of-the-match award in Pakistan's 167-run third Test defeat against England in August after scoring 173 in the tourists' first innings.

"Without doubt, Younis Khan is one of the leading batsmen in the world, and we are delighted to have secured his signature," said Yorkshire chief executive Stewart Regan.

Yorkshire has the largest Pakistani population outside London in Britain, and Regan hopes the signing will enable the club to boost its links with the Asian community.

"We hope this signing will act as a catalyst for the club to strengthen links with the significant Asian presence in Yorkshire, and we look forward to generating additional support in 2007 and beyond."

Younis's signing has been made possible by financial backing from ABDN, a business support organisation for Asian entrepreneurs, which is sponsoring Yorkshire to finance the right-hander's move to the county.

ABDN president Arshad Chaudhry said: "We are excited about this joint venture, which is the first of its kind. We feel that it will help to shed the image of Yorkshire County Cricket Club as an old-fashioned club."

"This opening of its doors will be welcomed by the Asian community, who are keen to get involved with Yorkshire cricket."

In 47 Tests Khan has scored 3,884 runs at an average of just under 50, with 12 hundreds and a best of 267 while Friday's Champions Trophy match against South Africa in Mohali was his 142nd one-day international.

Back in July leg-spinner Adil Rashid, the first Yorkshire-born Asian to make his debut for his county in a Championship fixture, got his career off to a dramatic start by taking six for 67 in a First Division win over Warwickshire at Scarborough.

It was not until the arrival of India star Sachin Tendulkar in 1992 that the club abandoned its policy of playing only Yorkshire-born players.

Sections of the crowd at Headingley were notoriously abusive towards non-white players, with West Indies batting great Viv Richards one of those singled out in the past.

But the county have always rejected accusations of racism and insisted that all those selected for the first team have been picked on merit.



Russian starlet Maria Sharapova jubilates after beating Switzerland's Patty Schnyder in the semifinal of the WTA tour Generali ladies tournament in Linz on Saturday. Sharapova won 7-5, 7-5.

Sharapova reaches final

AGENCIES, Linz

Maria Sharapova defeated third-seeded Patty Schnyder of Switzerland 7-5, 7-5 on Saturday to reach the final of the Linz Open.

The top-seeded Russian will be bidding for her fifth title of the year.

Victory by Sharapova effectively ended Schnyder's hopes of joining the eight-player field for the WTA Championships that takes place in Madrid next month.

Sharapova's opponent in the final will be second seed and defending champion Nadia Petrova of Russia, or fourth-seeded Czech Nicole Pietrangola, who were playing later on Saturday.

It was largely a forgettable match, despite the closeness of the score. Schnyder did manage to move Sharapova around well but neither player managed to find rhythm or consistency.

Sharapova took an early lead, breaking for 2-1. But, as she did twice in her quarterfinal win over Ana Ivanovic, she failed to serve out the set at her first opportunity.

After failing to convert three set points on Schnyder's serve at 5-3 she lost another on her own serve before Schnyder broke for 5-5.

Sharapova, however, broke again for 6-5 when her opponent hooked a backhand long, but had to hold off a break point before clinching the set on her sixth set point.

Sharapova immediately lost her own serve after breaking for 1-0 in the second set, but then broke again for 6-5 when Schnyder netted a forehand.

Double-faulting on her first match point, Sharapova finally took the match on her third with an ace.

Earlier on Friday, Sharapova defeated fifth-seeded Ana Ivanovic of Serbia 7-6, 7-5 Friday to reach the semifinals.

Schnyder, last year's runner-up, beat Vera Zvonareva of Russia 7-6, 6-4.

Defending champion Nadia Petrova topped Samantha Stosur of Australia 6-1, 6-3 in another quarterfinal. Petrova, seeded second, will next face fourth-seeded Nicole Pietrangola. Vaidisova rode a big serve in downing sixth-seeded Jelena Jankovic of Serbia 5-7, 7-6, 6-4.

Mary Pierce, who pulled out of her second-round match against Vera Zvonareva on Thursday, needs surgery on a ruptured ligament in her left knee. She left AKH hospital Friday and plans to be treated in France, the hospital said.

The 31-year-old Frenchwoman

was injured while running behind the baseline and was carried off the court on a stretcher. The two-time Grand Slam champion has played only eight events this year because of injuries to her right foot.

Sharapova missed three set points while serving at 5-4 in the first. She led 5-2 in the second set but double-faulted twice while serving for the match and was broken.

"I didn't know Ana's game too well as we had never met before, but she played some amazing tennis," Sharapova said. "I shouldn't have let her come back in the second set. I hope to learn from that."

Vaidisova served 20 aces against Jankovic.

"All these aces helped me a lot because I missed too many chances in the rallies," Vaidisova said.

Petrova won seven of the first eight games and broke Stosur for a fourth time in the second set.

"The first set was easy as she didn't make me move a lot," Petrova said. "I am happy with my performance here, but I still have not hit top form."

'Akhtar, Asif were missed'



AFP, Karachi

Pakistani greets Saturday lamented the team's early exit from the Champions Trophy and said they had missed their banned captain and dope-tainted bowlers Shoaib Akhtar and Mohammad Asif.

Pakistan's weakened line-up were bowled out for just 89 in their must-win match against South Africa after being set a target of 213.

Captain Inzamamul Haq is serving a ban for bringing the game into disrepute and Akhtar and Asif were pulled out of the squad last week after they tested positive for nandrolone.

"The pitch at Mohali would have been ideal for Asif and he would have been unplayable on such a pitch," said former captain Imran Khan.

"Akhtar would have been useful

and Inzamam would have given Pakistan the strength as a reliable batsman."

Imran singled out stand-in captain Younis Khan for his poor shot selection after falling for seven.

"When Younis got out the whole team got demoralised. Had he fought, the whole team would have fought for him just like Inzamam did against England last year," said Imran, referring to Inzamam's superb batting in Pakistan's 2-0 win against England.

"I am surprised at the defensive attitude, in a do-or-die match you adopt an aggressive approach which Pakistan did not have," he added.

Imran, now a member of the country's national parliament, said Pakistan must recover quickly before the World Cup in the West Indies next March and April.

"Pakistan will have to regroup quickly and the fear to lose a match should be eliminated. We won the World Cup from nowhere because we had no fears of losing," said Imran, who led Pakistan to their only

World Cup title in Australia in 1992.

"I hope this defeat give Pakistan team an opportunity and they select proper players rather than bits and pieces ones. For me leg-spinner Danish Kaneria should have been in the side because he is a strike bowler," he said.

Moin Khan, another former captain, said Pakistan's batsmen had let them down.

"I am surprised Pakistan did not attack after getting five South African wickets quickly. We should have had Kaneria in the team just like we had Mushtaq Ahmed in the 1992 World Cup because Mushtaq used to buy us wickets," he said.

The team was due to return later Saturday. Pakistan will face West Indies in three Tests and five one-day internationals at home starting next month.

Australia in Monty's good books only

AFP, Sydney

England's Ashes wildcard Monty Panesar, who some fear will become the subject of hostility from Australian crowds in next month's Test series, says he has only experienced kindness from Australia.

Panesar, who became the first Sikh to play Test cricket for England and in doing so won over the country's followers this year, spent a summer in Australia last year working on his game in Adelaide.

He boarded with a couple for three months and Adelaide's Glenelg club opened its dressing room to him.

South Australia's former Test batsman Darren Lehmann offered batting advice and the South Australian squad helped with his suspect fielding.

"Kepler Wessels (Northamptonshire coach) said Adelaide was the best place to go, just to work on the other areas of my

game, so I got an opportunity to train with the Redbacks (South Australia)," Panesar told the Melbourne Age from England Saturday. "That was very kind of them."

Rod Marsh, the former England academy coach now back in South Australia, said Panesar was the perfect student, despite his deficiencies outside the art of left-arm spin.

"He can throw okay, he's just a bit clumsy, a bit like a baby giraffe when he runs, but he's getting better all the time and that's all you can ask of a kid," Marsh told the newspaper.

"He wanted to play Test match cricket so badly that nothing was going to get in the way. He's a typical Indian, just absolutely in love with the game of cricket."

Less than a year later, with 32 wickets at 32 and a serious cut following from his first 10 Tests, Panesar is England's wildcard, and less of a liability in the field and with the bat.

Some in England are convinced Panesar, 24, will be the subject of ridicule or, worse, persecution from

Australian crowds.

"Focusing on my own game plan helps me to stay thick-skinned, and do what I have to do for the team," Panesar said.

Marsh does not anticipate much anti-Monty sentiment during the Ashes.

"(The Barmy Army) will worship the ground he walks on, and they might drag a few Australians with them," he said.

"He's a lovable young man, he's got a beautiful smile and if the Australian crowds do get into him, it will only be because he's taken a lot of wickets."

Panesar fully expects Australia's batsmen to come at him hard.

"They at least have heard of me and I'm a thought in their mind, which is very flattering," he said.

"Hopefully, I can do that in Australia. I will try and keep it simple, more than anything, and try and accept their style of play and stay patient within that."

Werder wreak

FOOTBALL GOALKEEPER Tim Wiese to find the top corner, but that hope did not last long.

Within a minute, Werder scored again. Wache managed to block an initial effort from Klose but Hunt was on hand to sweep home the rebound.

With 10 minutes left on the clock, great improvisation from Torsten Frings found Diego and the former Porto midfielder picked out fellow Brazilian Naldo who headed in number five.

Diego then completed a miserable night for Mainz with a deflected goal, which made it five in five games for the Brazilian - a record that is as long as Bremen's winning streak.

Aus v Ind

FOOTBALL GOALKEEPER Tim Wiese to find the top corner, but that hope did not last long.

"The good thing he has some time to recover," said Dravid. "If he is fit, he will play. But we have two other batsmen, Mohammad Kaif and Dinesh Mongia, waiting in the wings."

TEAMS

AUSTRALIA (from): Ricky Ponting (captain), Nathan Bracken, Michael Clarke, Dan Cullen, Adam Gilchrist, Brad Hogg, Michael Hussey, Mitchell Johnson, Simon Katich, Brett Lee, Damien Martyn, Glenn McGrath, Shane Watson, Andrew Symonds.

INDIA (from): Rahul Dravid (captain), Mahendra Dhoni, Mohammad Kaif, Dinesh Mongia, Munaf Patel, Irfan Pathan, Ramesh Powar, Suresh Raina, Virender Sehwag, Harbhajan Singh, Rudra Pratap Singh. Shanthakumar, Sreesanth, Sachin Tendulkar.

Campbell slams McClaren

FOOTBALL GOALKEEPER Tim Wiese to find the top corner, but that hope did not last long.

"Jamo" is playing the best football of his career and people should admit that instead of hiding from it or pushing it under the carpet."

Portsmouth were fifth in the Premiership going into Saturday's match against Reading at Fratton Park - and Campbell is loving life with the south coast club.

Campbell, part of a defence which has conceded just five goals in their first nine games, added: "I am like a kid."

"I'm playing football and enjoying it again and as long as I'm happy I want to do well."

"It's not just about training and playing - it's about achieving something special here as well."

Midfielders

FOOTBALL GOALKEEPER Tim Wiese to find the top corner, but that hope did not last long.

only for referee Atkinson to change his mind and blow for an earlier free-kick infringement.

That momentary controversy galvanised the home side again, with tackles beginning to fly in and Montgomery booked for hacking down the flying Kalou on Chelsea's left wing.

But Ballack came close to grabbing his second with a 65th minute snap-shot from close to the penalty spot which flashed inches over Kenny's bar.

United continued to have their moments, mostly through the impressive Quinn on the left, and his fine 72nd minute cross fell to Hulse who headed over in front of goal.

Roger survives a scare

AFP, Basel

Home hero Roger Federer had to work his way out of tiebreak trouble to stop David Ferrer 6-3, 7-6 for a place in the semifinals of the Swiss Indoors on Friday.

The world No. 1 led a Swiss sweep after Stanislas Wawrinka upset former winner David Nalbandian of Argentina, the second seed, 7-6, 6-2.

Federer, who has lost two finals here and is aiming for an 11th trophy this season, won his 22nd straight match - but not without difficulty.

"I had to adjust, I couldn't play free in the tiebreaker," said the Swiss, 85-5 this season. "My serve was not helping me out that much."

"But I played some great points under pressure. In the end it was a great match."

"I have the feeling that I'm playing a great game. I'm feeling very consistent from the baseline, but I need to pick my serve up."

"But I'm really happy with the way that I played."

"He hung in and deserved to comeback. It's been like that every time we've played. I had to weather the storm."

The top seed had to salvage six set points off the feisty Ferrer's racket, finally advancing on his own fourth match point when the Spanish fifth seed launched a forehand out.

He next faces Thai Paradorn Srichaphan, who beat Argentine Jose Acasoro of Argentina 7-6, 6-3, levelling his 2006 record to 30-30.

It is Paradorn's third semifinal since September after Beijing and Bangkok.

Wawrinka handed Nalbandian a loss as he dominated against the Argentine.

"He played better than me today, I was always on the defensive," said the South American, 18-3 in Basel and sixth in the race for the season-ending Masters Cup in China next month.

"I wasn't able to play my game. But I'm a bit closer to Shanghai and I have next week (last event of the regular season in Paris)."

Holder Fernando Gonzalez profited from a late-match tantrum from untried teenager Juan Del Potro to claim a 5-7, 6-4, 6-4 victory into the semi-finals of the Swiss Indoors on Friday.

Chile's third-seeded ironman, playing in his sixth three-set match since last week, pounced on the emotional lapse of his 18-year-old Argentine opponent after breaking Del Potro for a 5-4 lead in the final set.

The youngster, ranked 91st, shook his ponytail and slammed his racket repeatedly to the ground as the pair of battlers went for the changeover.

The match-tough Chilean calmly served out victory a game later on the first of three match points to head into his third semifinal in as many weeks indoors after two hours, 13 minutes.

"I knew it would be a tough match, I beat him earlier this year and knew what it would be like," said Gonzalez. "He's young and still learning."

"In a match you have to be prepared for everything, for good times and bad times. Anything can happen."

Gayle, Bravo

FROM PAGE 17

the Sardar Patel Stadium on Saturday:

WEST INDIES

Gayle run out 101

Chanderpaul lbw b Lewis 13

Bravo not out 112

Sarwan c Collingwood b Mahmood 29

Lara b Mahmood 3

Samuels not out 3

Extras: (lb-1, nb-1, w-9) 11

Total: (For four wkts in 50 overs) 272

Fall of wickets: 1-35, 2-209, 3-259, 4-268.

Bowler

O M R W

Anderson 10 0 72 0

Lewis 10 1 35 1

Flintoff 5 0 27 0

Mahmood 7 0 44 2

Yardy 5 1 32 0

Dalrymple 10 0 42 0

Collingwood 3 0 19 0

Toss: West Indies

Teenage stars

FROM PAGE 17

by 55 runs after going to stumps at 39 for one with prospective Test opener Phil Jaques out for a duck.

Portuguese-born Henriques claimed 3-0 with his first 21 balls and returned after a 90-minute rest to take two more wickets.

He starred with both bat and ball in leading Australia at the under-19 World Cup in Sri Lanka last year, claiming 16 wickets at 10.62 and scoring 150 runs at 37.5.

In Adelaide, a last session counter-attack by South Australian captain Darren Lehmann and Cameron Borgas pegged back Victoria on day two of their match.

South Australia slid to 70 for four at tea, before Lehmann (75 not out) and Borgas (66) added 121 in 119 minutes to take SA to 197 for five at stumps.

The home side is still some distance short of Victoria's 385 for six declared, with Test leg-spinner Shane Warne claiming 2-65.

8x3