

A question of survival for both

BRISBANE, Mar 6 : Both Pakistan and South Africa face bowling worries ahead of their crucial match here on Sunday which could end the world Cup cricket dreams for one of them, reports Reuter.

Pakistan are in the gravest danger. Defeat would almost certainly prevent them reaching the semifinal stage.

They have acquired only three points from their four games so far, including a rather lucky one when they looked to be facing certain defeat before rain caused their match against England in Adelaide to be abandoned.

South Africa are slightly better off, two wins out of four putting them in fourth place in the nine team round-robin stage of the tournament, ahead on run rate of West Indies whom they beat on Thursday.

But defeat for them would leave the difficult task of having to win each of their final three matches to be sure of a semifinal place.

Pakistan's problems centre around their fast bowling spearhead Wasim Akram and their captain Imran Khan.

Akram failed to take a wicket in Pakistan's 43-run defeat by India on Wednesday and conceded 45 runs in his 10 overs which included five wickets and two no-balls.

His lack of control and penetration only served to emphasise the blow suffered by Pakistan with the loss through injury of their key fast bowler Waqar Younis shortly before the World Cup began.

Imran, leading wicket-taker over the previous four World Cups with 27 victims at an average of just under 15, would ideally like to open the bowling in place of Akram.

But he is still troubled by a shoulder injury which kept him out of the opening match and he admits he is still not fully fit.

"I think if I start bowling a bit quicker and get a little fit-

ter, I could bring Wasim on at number three," he said.

"I would like to be able to open the bowling and settle things down early on".

Imran bowled eight over in the match against India, his first spell in the tournament, at a conservative cost of 24 runs but he required pain killers to get him through.

South Africa's problem is of a somewhat different nature with a calf injury to star batsman Peter Kirsten almost certainly ruling out the use of his

for his university and he can be relied on to put it on the spot," he said.

Another alternative would be to leave out Mark Rushmore, who has so far not achieved a great deal, and bring in another young batsman, Ianis Cronje, who has the ability to send down a tidy spell of gentle medium-pace scammers.

Pakistan, strongly tipped behind Australia and England before the tournament, have failed to live up to expecta-

sure after 22 years in isolation.

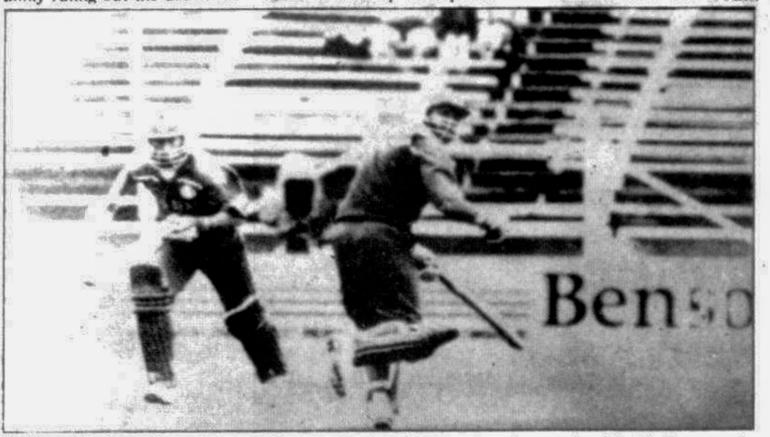
Captain Keping Wessels said Friday that his team was coping well with new problems—including the expectations of fans at home.

"When you win you are heroes. When you lose you are villains," Wessels said.

"That unfortunately, is the way South Africans are and I suppose they always will be."

"We've been through that with four games now. Hopefully we'll hang in there."

Wessels said the South



Andrew Hudson (L) and Peter Kirsten (R) break for a run during the World Cup match against the West Indies in Christchurch on Mar 5. — AFP photo

Tough task ahead for Aussies

ADELAIDE, Australia, Mar 6: Australia began the World Cup cricket tournament as a red-hot favorite to retain the title they won in India and Pakistan four years ago, reports AP.

Two weeks on, the Australians face an uphill battle to qualify for the semifinals of the nine-nation tournament.

Australia have lost three of their opening four matches and find themselves in eighth position in the standings, ahead of only winless Zimbabwe.

Captain Allan Border, the consummate professional, has struggled to score runs, while his teammates have struggled in the field.

The Australians expect to rush allrounder Mark Waugh back into their team for Saturday's match against Sri Lanka at the Adelaide Oval.

Sri Lanka have clinched five points from their opening four matches to emerge as the surprise team of the tournament. The islanders never have qualified for the semifinals.

Since 1987, Australia have won four-fifths of their 60 limited-overs matches and Border's side was regarded as the tactical pace-setter in the abridged game.

But after a romp through the World Series triangular competition against India and the West Indies, Australia lost their opening World Cup game to New Zealand, then the second to South Africa.

Border, who assumed the captaincy with the Australian team in turmoil in 1984, was headed back to the rocks after guiding Australia to clear water.

"I wish I could explain what's going on. That way I could right things," he said.

"Four weeks before the World Cup began, we were

Australian captain.

Australia have their last chance to stay in contention for a semifinal spot when they face Sri Lanka at Adelaide Oval on Saturday.

Waugh was dumped after Australia's opening loss to New Zealand, was 12th man for the next two games and omitted altogether for Thursday night's eight-wicket loss to England at the Sydney Cricket Ground.

Border said the Australian middle-order needs to be strengthened.

"We just haven't put a score on the board," he said.

"Once we lost four or five wickets the tail didn't wag at all, not batting through."

Border said Australia had taken the World Cup competition too lightly.

"We didn't have the sort of preparation we should have," he said.

Border said the Australians had not written off their chances.

"The bottom line is we have to win the remainder of our games and win well," he said.

Sri Lanka should be strengthened by the return of opener Athula Samarasekera, who has been sidelined by a hamstring injury.

Pace bowler Graeme Labrooy could play his first game after replacing injured teammate Ramesh Ratnayake.

The Sri Lankans said Friday that they expected to feel an Australian backlash.

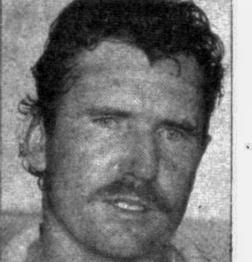
"I don't think Australia can play as badly as they did against England," said team manager Ranjit Fernando.

"To us, Australia still is a very, very tough opponent. The Australians are grim fighters and they'll do everything to stay in the running."

"But we have hardly anything to lose, but everything to gain."

Sri Lankan captain Aravinda De Silva said his team needed to worry about its own form, not that of Australia.

"I feel if we play to the best of our ability, we can do well against any side," he said.



ALLAN BORDER

WOW, WHAT A WEEK!

by Chandrashekhar

Andrew Lang wrote, in a laudable Emerson in his poem 'Brahma', 'If the wild bowler thinks he bowls/Or if the batsman thinks he is bowled/They know not, poor misguided souls/They too shall perish unconsolidated/I am the batsman and the ball/I am the bowler and the ball/The umpire, the pavilion cat/The roller, pitch and stumps and all.

Whether God is so much interested in toying with the efforts and expectations of the mortals involved in this funny game of cricket, particularly the one-day variety, has always been like that. The fifth Benson and Hedges World Cup cricket, now almost into the third week, has so far been a competition of ironic reversals.

Pundits and lovers of this game have now become used to the practice of eating their words in view of the series of upsets that have taken place so far. Australia, the most fancied side before the tournament really got underway, are now struggling to make it to the knockout stage. New Zealand, the cohorts, continue to be the team to beat alongside England, while Pakistan, India and South Africa are languishing behind Sri Lanka.

Quite expectedly the second week of the championship featuring a number of existential clashes had a lot of excitement in store for the enthusiasts. While Pakistan were extremely lucky to get away with a point in the rain ruined match against England at Adelaide, India relived the bitter memories of a one-run defeat to Australia at Sydney. It was a pathetic slice of ill-luck for a side that had to be contented with a solitary point from the rain washed match with Sri Lanka. They fought back marvelously to inflict a 43-run defeat upon Pakistan. It was a magnificent effort for a team dogged by bad luck.

South Africa seemed to have been over with their 'high trip' after that nine-wicket victory against Australia with two rather undistinguished defeats against New Zealand and Sri Lanka when they made the practical step of exercising cricket of the apartheid by beating two time Cup champions West Indies. The West Indies, who vetoed against the readmission of the Springboks after a lapse of 21 years must have not liked the 64-run drubbing.

While England and New Zealand are assured of semifinal berths Sri Lanka with five points have reasons to be optimistic about carving a niche in the last four. The English lion really feasted on the kangaroo with that overwhelming victory at Sydney on Thursday.

With Zimbabwe as the only lamb in the fray, the West Indies, South Africa, India and Pakistan will be engaged in an intriguing, last-ditch battle to qualify for the semis over the next few days. Specially South Africa and India, after their redeeming performances in their last encounters, look heated and poised to give it a real go. Will 'that Promethean heat return their light?

Beds too small

BALLARAT, Mar 6: The England cricket team walked out of its official World Cup hotel on Friday night after saying the beds were not big enough, reports AP.

The entire England squad got into the team bus and drove back to Melbourne, 100 miles (160 kilometers) away.

Paul Rice, manager of the Old Ballarat Village hotel, said the England team had left without explanation, saying they would return on Sunday night.

"The fact is they were here, and they've gone back to Melbourne," Rice said.

Unbeaten England plays Sri Lanka in a World Cup match at Ballarat, a town with a population of 40,000 on Monday.

Team members told a receptionist the beds were not big enough, which was later confirmed by England coach Mickey Stewart.

"We have some very important matches to play, and everyone needs to have the right amount of sleep," Stewart said. "It was obvious as soon as we got there, and it was not a question of any of the players raising the issue with me."

"The motel was full up and could not supply any more beds suitable for the size of our cricketers."

Rice said the reservation for the team had been made some months ago.

"It is true that our beds do not suit someone who is 6 feet, 8 inches tall (2.03 meters), but there were no special requests made regarding beds," he said.

"They had known they were going to be staying here."

Rice said the motel had catered to cricket journalists and soccer teams in the past, and there had been no complaints about the facilities.

"We are a very busy hotel with bookings up 25 per cent over the past six months," Rice said. "That is excellent in today's economic climate."

The England team later booked into the 5-star Regent of Melbourne hotel, which was its base for previous visits to that city.

The Sri Lankan team, which plays Australian in Adelaide on Saturday, also is booked into the Old Ballarat Village.

Kiwi game plan may tilt scale

AUCKLAND, Mar 6: New Zealand have beaten West Indies only once in 12-one-day cricket internationals but the form and preparation of Martin Crowe's team are factors to tilt the balance in Sunday's World Cup encounter, reports Reuter.

Crowe's New Zealanders, against all predictions and early season performance, have won their first four World Cup matches, and in style.

They are the tournament front-runners and near certain to reach the semifinals with four home matches left.

West Indies, Cup winners in 1975 and 1979, have won two and lost two and are in danger of missing the semifinals.

What may turn the tide in favour of West Indies is that their need to win is greater than that of New Zealand is that their need to win is greater than that of New Zealand.

"We have to win our remaining matches to make sure we are in the semifinals," captain Richie Richardson said after his side were hammered by South Africa on Wednesday.

"We have to get ourselves into a winning habit."

But New Zealand will be playing on their favourite Eden Park Ground, the same venue,

although a different pitch, where they comprehensively beat pre-tournament favourites Australia, and last Saturday blasted South Africa off the Park.

South Africa's vaunted pace attack could not adapt to the slower pitch and the West Indians may have the same problem.

New Zealand in the past have had the utmost difficulty dealing with the feared West Indian quick men — their only one-day win was in 1980 — but the confidence of their batsmen is riding high and the slowish pitch may help combat the pace.

New Zealand's largely slow-medium attack, backed by Dipak Patel opening with his gentle off-spin, has proved tight and the undoing of many batsmen who have hit out in frustration.

But what really seems to separate the two teams and makes New Zealand the more likely to prevail is their pre-match planning and organisation.

While Crowe's side have appeared one team to have thoroughly thought out their game plan, West Indies have seemed disorganised and lacking discipline.

Nearly a quarter of South Africa's total of 200 against the West Indians came from extras

and misfielding.

As well, their batting lacks substance and consistency in the middle and lower order.

Richardson said his side had to be more positive in approach and a bit more disciplined.

"Maybe we needed to resist a bit more and be more patient."

Adding to their woes, their most experienced batsman Desmond Haynes is in doubt for the match after being struck on the index finger three times by the South Africa pacemen.

For Crowe, the problems are mostly happy ones — who to leave out.

Wicketkeeper Ian Smith is in doubt with a finger injury and should be unfit if would partially solve the problem.

Mark Greatbatch, who put South Africa to the sword last Saturday, would take the gloves and allow a place for opener John Wright, who has been injured.

Of the New Zealand bowlers, only all-rounder Chris Cairns has yet to hit form. But his batting gives crucial balance to the team and Crowe is likely to persist with him.

"It's a vital all-rounder for us and we want him to be in the thick of it for the rest of the tournament," said Crowe of the talented 21-year old.

England — a hybrid band

ADELAIDE, Mar 6: England's cricket melting pot has produced a team that is on course for a place in the final of the World Cup, reports AP.

Its own league of nations, England's squad has members born in South Africa, Hong Kong, Zimbabwe, Guyana, Barbados and even Kenya. Half the team was born overseas.

Batsmen Robin Smith and Allan Lamb, who has yet to play because of injury but is certain to have a role in the finals, are the South African connection in the team that's unbeaten after four first round games.

Grame Hick, scorer of a mass of runs of English county cricket before he became eligible for England, was born in Zimbabwe, while bowler Derek Pringle hails from Nairobi, Kenya.

Pacemen Phil DeFreitas, Gladstone Small and Chris Lewis have West Indies heritage, while all-rounder Dermot Reeve was born and raised in the British colony of Hong Kong.

No other country has such a cosmopolitan crew, but Reeve said Friday that the team never thought about the differences in background.

"It doesn't occur to us, we're all British," he said.

"Everyone in the team wants to play for England and everyone was destined to."

Hick left Zimbabwe to play full-time cricket. He will play against former teammates in the World Cup.

Smith said he was eager to play against South Africa.



LAMB LEWIS



SMALL SMITH

He started playing in the only two Hong Kong competitions at the age of 14 and four years later he went back to England and joined the ground staff at Lords.

He signed up with Sussex in 1983 and now plays for Warwickshire.

Reeve said he owned his place in the England team to the country's unique 'all-rounder' approach to the Cup.

"If England chose the best six batsmen, the best four bowlers and a wicket-keeper there's no way I'd be in the team," he said.

"Playing for England is something I've always aimed at. There were people along the way who laughed at me and I admit I look like a very average player, but the team is getting results."

Everyone has played a part in England's success, the bowlers taking wickets and the batsmen belting runs.

The crucial match came Thursday against Australia in front of a hostile crowd at the Sydney Cricket Ground.

England whipped its arch-rival by eight-wickets to confirm its standing as the tournament favourite.

As has been the case throughout the tournament, players from around the globe played their part in the win.

Indians to take no chances

HAMILTON, Mar 6: India will take nothing for granted when it faces winless Zimbabwe in a World Cup cricket match Saturday at Trustbank Park, reports AP.

Indian captain Mohammad Azharuddin said Friday that his team had a healthy respect for the tournament underdogs.

"We've got to try and get two points, but we'll have to be at our best," Azharuddin said.

"You never know with these type of games. They can become quite tough."

"Zimbabwe have nothing to lose. It is the same no matter who you face. You just go out and do your best."

Azharuddin said he knew a little about the African nation, which has lost all four of its matches to date.

"I've played against them a few times, including the last time in the (1987) World Cup," he said.

"I've got a fair idea of what they are like, and I'm looking forward to playing against them again."

Zimbabwe captain David Houghton said his team was keen to make life difficult for India.

"We've got four games remaining and we'd like to pick up a few wins if we can," he said.

"It's just a matter of us going out there and playing to the best of our ability. If things go for us, who knows what can happen."

"Zimbabwe is out of contention after four straight losses, but is keen to cause an upset."

Azharuddin said his team would have little trouble in readjusting to slow paced wickets after five months playing on the harder, faster pitches in Australia.

"We play on slow wickets back home as well, so there is no reason why we should have any problem."

Indians resent Sikh display

NEW DELHI, Mar 6: The presence of Sikh separatist sympathisers at an India-Pakistan World Cup cricket match in Australia sparked a nationalist demonstration and was mentioned in parliament here Thursday, reports AP.

Some 50 activists of the so-called National Forum, including Sikhs, staged a protest on the edge of the high-security diplomatic area after cutting short an intended march on the Australian High Commission, witnesses said.

They shouted nationalist slogans and denounced Australian television for broadcasting footage of saffron-clad Sikhs waving flags of Khalistan, the name of the homeland Sikh militants want to carve from the state of Punjab.

India beat arch-rivals Pakistan by 43 runs for their first World Cup victory in Sydney on Wednesday, undisturbed by the presence of the Sikh separatist sympathisers cheering their opponents on.

Captains' conundrum

SYDNEY, Mar 6: Allan Border is baffled, Richie Richardson seeks the winning habit and Imran Khan has pace bowling worries, reports Reuter.

The captains of Australia, West Indies and Pakistan respectively were divided by contrasting problems but united by their ambition — a place in the semifinals — on Friday's rest day in the cricket World Cup.

The three sides return to action at the weekend for a vital phase in the battle to finish among the top four in the nine team standings.

Border's Australians, the holders, are at a particularly crucial point after losing three of their first four games. They need to win their last four, starting with third-placed Sri Lanka at Adelaide Oval on Saturday.

Border is at a loss to explain why his side, the original hot favourites, are on the brink of going out.

West Indies' problem is partly one of discipline, espe-

cially in the field, after winning twice and losing twice.

"We have to get ourselves into the winning habit," he said.

Richardson also added they needed to be more positive in approach and a bit more disciplined.

Pakistan have also shown inconsistent form, winning once in four matches with one game washed out and Imran acknowledges the opening attack is a problem.

Wasim Akram has not shown sufficient control or penetration and Imran, nursing a shoulder strain, would ideally like to open the bowling.

"I think if I start bowling a bit quicker and get a little fitter, I could bring Wasim on at number three," he said. "I would like to be able to open the bowling and settle things down early on."

Pakistan's next match is in Brisbane on Sunday against South Africa, who remain something of an enigma. Stunning wins over Australia and West Indies have been offset by defeats at the hands of New Zealand and Sri Lanka.

Windies confident of making semis

AUCKLAND, Mar 6: The two-time champion West Indies remain confident of qualifying for the World Cup semi-finals despite their shock loss to South Africa, captain Richie Richardson said Friday, reports AP.

South Africa defeated the Caribbean squad by 64 runs in Christchurch on Thursday, leaving the West Indies with an unimpressive 2-2 record.

"We have to win our remaining matches to make sure we are in the semifinals,"

Richardson said looking ahead to Sunday's match against unbeaten New Zealand at Eden Park.

"We have to get ourselves into a winning habit."

New Zealand and England are virtually certain to clinch two of the semifinal spots, leaving six teams chasing the remaining two positions. Only Zimbabwe, which is 0-4, is completely out of contention.

"We've been set back a bit by yesterday's loss, but if we can get it together and everybody clicks, we shouldn't have too many problems," Richardson said.

The West Indies need to be

more positive in their approach and a bit more disciplined, he added.

Adding to Richardson's problems is a finger injury to veteran opening batsman Desmond Haynes, who will undergo a fitness test before Sunday's match.

Haynes took a nasty blow on his right index finger from paceman Richard Snell in Thursday's game and was forced to retire hurt on 13.

He returned six overs later to add 17 more runs.

"We are very hopeful he'll be OK for the next match," Richardson said.



Chris Lewis (R) celebrates as David Boon (L) is run out after only 18 runs during the World Cup match on March 5 at the Sydney Cricket Ground. — AFP photo