

England savage the Lankans

BALLARAT, Mar 9: England fast bowler Chris Lewis captured four wickets in a blazing opening spell to destroy Sri Lanka today and virtually ensure his side a place in the semifinals of the cricket World Cup, reports Reuter.

Lewis bowled openers Roshan Mahanama (9) and Athula Samarasekera (23), had captain Aravinda De Silva brilliantly caught by Neil Fairbrother one-handed in the gully, and caught and bowled Asanka Gurusinha (7).

His destruction, producing figures at one stage of four for 25 in the 12th over, ended any hope Sri Lanka had of passing England's huge 280 for six in their 50 overs on the tiny Ballarat Oval, an easy-paced gift for hard hitters.

But the England victory by 106 runs had its price. Captain Graham Gooch, the veteran of his side at 38, pulled a hamstring in his left leg chasing a four and could be rested for two matches.

He left the field and was being examined by a physiotherapist.

Lewis, named man-of-the-match, finished with four for 30 off eight overs.

Only Arjuna Ranatunga, Sri Lanka's leading scorer in one-day internationals, showed any resistance, but he snicked a catch to keeper Alec Stewart off Ian Botham and was out for 36.

After that, Sri Lanka slid inevitably to defeat and were all out for 174 in the 44th over, giving England an emphatic victory in front of an 8,000 crowd, half made up of flag-waving Sri Lankans from nearby Melbourne.

England's success put them on nine points in the nine-team competition, second to leaders New Zealand (10), after four wins. One match was abandoned due to rain.

Sri Lanka, with two wins and three defeats, now have a tough task to reach the semifinals.

England's score was the third highest of the tournament, beaten only by Sri Lanka's 313 for seven and Zimbabwe's 312 for four which were scored when the two teams met on the opening weekend.

The England innings gathered such breathtaking momentum that they plundered 73 off the last six overs.

Paceman Graeme Labrooy bowled Gooch with his fourth ball of the match while Smith was run out by a good throw from Roshan Mahanama.

Botham, stepping away from the wicket to smash another

four, misjudged the flight of a ball from left-arm spinner Don Anurasiri and was bowled mid-leg and leg.

Botham hit five fours and two sixes, a straight drive and one to square leg, after which he bowed to the crowd in typically flamboyant fashion.



LEWIS... man-of-the-match



FAIRBROTHER... 63

England were boosted by the middle order, with Graeme Hick slamming a robust 41 in a fourth wicket partnership of 59 with Neil Fairbrother, who hit a lusty 63.

In the final assault, Alec Stewart was particularly savage, finishing with one six and seven fours from the 46 balls he faced for his 59.

Stewart and Fairbrother figured in an 80-run partnership for the fifth wicket before Fairbrother was caught by Champaka Ramanayake on the boundary attempting to hit his third six.

Sri Lanka had done well earlier to contain England to 121 for three off 30 overs after some tight bowling from spinner Don Anurasiri.

Aravinda De Silva's side then lost its way late in the innings when its bowlers continually bowled short when line and length was essential.

Stewart hit his half-century off only 32 balls in 43 minutes, while Fairbrother brought up his 50 off just 63 in 85 minutes.

Sri Lanka next play the West Indies in Perth on Friday and then face Pakistan on Sunday in Perth.

England next play on Thursday when they face South Africa in a day-night match at the Melbourne Cricket Ground.

Gooch pulls a hamstring

BALLARAT, Mar 9: England captain Graham Gooch suffered a hamstring injury today, leaving a cloud over his future participation in the cricket World Cup, reports Reuter.

"There's a very small tear in the hamstring," Gooch said after he limped off the field during England's 106-run victory over Sri Lanka.

Gooch, the veteran of the England party at 38, said he chased a ball at mid-on and soon after felt a sharp pull behind the upper part of the left thigh as he was running in the outfield.

"The physiotherapist believes there could be a very small tear in the hamstring," said Gooch, whose growing influence as both captain and opening batsman has been largely responsible.

For England's revival in the last two years.

He will have treatment for the injury over the next few days and delay a decision on whether or not to play in England's next match, against South Africa in Melbourne on Thursday.

"If it's not right I won't play. If it goes again, then I'm gone. That will be it," he said.

England's win over Sri Lanka virtually ensures a place in the semifinals, which begin on March 21.

"Win another game and I'd say put our name in (the semifinals)," said the cautious Gooch.

CUP STANDINGS

World Cup cricket standings after Monday's match (Tabulate under played, won, lost, no result, points, net run-rate):

New Zealand	5	5	0	0	10	0.86
England	5	4	0	1	9	1.05
South Africa	5	3	2	0	6	0.12
India	5	2	2	1	5	0.53
Sri Lanka	6	2	3	1	5	-0.56
West Indies	5	2	3	0	4	-0.12
Australia	5	2	3	0	4	-0.25
Pakistan	5	1	3	1	3	-0.14
Zimbabwe	5	0	5	0	0	-1.26

Note: Net run-rate is difference between batting and bowling rates. Under competition rules, runs scored in no-result matches are not included in run-rate.

Scoreboard

Scoreboard in the World Cup cricket match between England and Sri Lanka today:

ENGLAND

Gooch b Labrooy	8
Botham b Anurasiri	47
Smith run out	19
Hick b Ramanayake	41
Fairbrother c Ramanayake	63
b Gurusinha	20
Lewis not out	20
Stewart c Jayasuriya	59
b Gurusinha	0
Pringle not out	0
Extras: (b-1, lb-9, w-9, nb-4)	23
Total: (six wickets-50 overs)	280

Fall of wickets: 1-44, 2-80, 3-105, 4-164, 5-244, 6-268.

Did not bat: D Reeve, P DeFreitas, R Illingworth.

Bowling:

O	M	R	W
Labrooy	10	1	68
Wickremasinghe	9	0	54
Anurasiri	10	1	27
Ramanayake	10	1	42
Gurusinha	10	0	67
Jayasuriya	1	0	12

SRI LANKA

Mahanama c Botham b Lewis	9
Samarasekera c Illingworth	23
b Lewis	23
Gurusinha c and b Lewis	7
De Silva c Fairbrother	6
Ranatunga c Stewart	36
b Botham	4
Tillekeratne run out	4
Jayasuriya c DeFreitas	19
b Illingworth	19
Labrooy c Smith b Illingworth	19
Ramanayake c and b Reeve	12
Anurasiri lbw b Reeve	11
Wickremasinghe not out	6
Extras: (lb-7, w-8, nb-6)	21
Total: (44 overs)	174

Fall of wickets: 1-33, 2-46, 3-56, 4-60, 5-91, 6-119, 7-123, 8-156, 9-158.

Bowling:

O	M	R	W
Lewis	8	0	30
DeFreitas	5	1	31
Pringle	7	1	27
Botham	10	0	33
Illingworth	10	0	32
Reeve	4	0	14

Result: England won by 106 runs.

Man-of-the-match: Chris Lewis.

It's do-or-die for India, Windies

WELLINGTON, Mar 9: Former champions India and the West Indies meet in a crucial World Cup cricket showdown at the Basin Reserve on Tuesday with the loser certain to be eliminated from semifinal contention, reports AP.

The teams are caught in a desperate five-way battle for two semifinal berths along with South Africa, defending champion Australia and Sri Lanka.

New Zealand and England are virtually assured of the first two semifinal spots.

India goes into the match with two wins and a no-result for five points, while the West Indies has four points.

South Africa has six points, Sri Lanka five and Australia four.

"It is do-or-die for us," said Indian captain Mohammad Azharuddin.

The West Indies worked through a full 2-1/2 hour training session Monday that underscored the new sense of urgency in the team.

"It doesn't look very good but we've just got to go out there and play well," said team manager Deryck Murray.

"We've now got ourselves in a situation where we can't afford to lose a game, or even a point."

"We're hoping the weather holds, we have a game and we can take the two points."

Azharuddin said neither team could afford to consider defeat.

"It's very important for both teams," he said. "If the West Indies lose then they are really going to struggle."

"And if we lost, we will also struggle with only a couple of games left."

"If we win tomorrow, especially against the West Indies, it would be very big morale-booster for our team."

India has beaten the West Indies four times this season in the World Series Cup in Australia and Azharuddin is keen to maximise any benefits he can extract from that.

"I should think it would give us a psychological advantage, because they aren't an easy team to beat," he said.

Murray said the West Indies team needed to live up to its



AZHARUDDIN



RICHIE RICHARDSON

Richardson bemoans poor batting

WELLINGTON, Mar 9: West Indies captain Richie Richardson bemoans an improved batting performance from his team for the World Cup cricket showdown against India at the Basin Reserve on Tuesday, reports Reuter.

The West Indians, with two wins in five games, have yet to reach full potential while India seem to be peaking at the right time after two consecutive victories.

"It's important that we play a lot better than we have been and that we win the remaining three matches," Richardson said after his team had been convincingly beaten by leaders New Zealand on Sunday.

An early exit by West Indies, who won the Cup in the inaugural tournament in 1975 and retained it in 1979, would almost certainly mean a hot reception back in the Caribbean for Richardson and his teammates.

"We haven't been playing to our full potential, we haven't been playing very well," he said.

"If we play like we are playing, it's going to be very difficult in the remaining matches."

"The batting has let us down quite a bit. We need to

get partnerships going," he added.

Although playing more assertively than West Indies, 1983 Cup winners India have had their share of problems with bad weather and the less-than-perfect rules for rain-affected matches.

Much has been made of the slower pitches in New Zealand but Indian captain Mohammad Azharuddin said teams had to adapt to conditions and his side were used to playing on such surfaces at home.

"We had no problems re-adjusting but it is more difficult to go on to faster wickets than get back to playing on the slower ones," he said.

He does not believe the slower pitches particularly disadvantage West Indies with their famed fast bowling attack.

In fact, against New Zealand it was the West Indian batsmen who failed properly to come to terms with the lower-bouncing pitch and Richardson said he was hoping for a faster, bouncier track in Wellington.

"Judging from when I played there last, the surface may be slow but it should be firmer (than Auckland's Eden Park)," he said.

Azharuddin believes his team, lifted by the scintillating batting of Sachin Tendulkar, is close to playing at their peak.

potential. "We certainly have the talent; it's just that we aren't getting the performances from everyone at the same time," he said.

"Over the five games we've played, the batsmen have half centuries, the bowlers have bowled good spells, the fielding has been good in patches."

"But what we haven't been able to do is put it altogether all the time and turn out a consistently good performance."

The West Indies is considering bringing in experienced campaigner Patrick Patterson for young bowler Anderson Cummins.

India may bring in heavy-hitting batsman Praveen Amre for Vinoo Kambli.

Tie in Div II Sports Reporter

Three Star and Azad Boys shared points in a tied match while Nirman Schools Eleven won in the Rank-Xerox Second Division cricket super league yesterday.

In an exciting match at the Dhanmondi Cricket Stadium, Azad Boys Club, chasing Three Star's score of 183, managed to muster the same number of runs for nine wickets when the overs ran out.

Earlier, Three Star batted first and were all out for 183 with Akik making 38. Azim of Azad claimed four for 36.

Mithu top-scored with 39 as Azad made 183 for nine in their turn. Three Star's Pijush was the pick of the bowlers with figures of three for 28.

Nirman Schools Eleven defeated Amar Jyoti by five wickets at the Mohakhali T and T ground.

Amar Jyoti's decision to bat first backfired as they could manage only 153 for nine from their quota of 40 overs. Biplob of Nirman wrought havoc taking four for 19.

Nirman made 156 for five in 34.3 overs with Apon making 32.

Nirman cricket Sports Reporter

Dhanmondi Govt High School beat Scholastica High School by a massive 168 runs while Mohammadpur Govt Boys' School recorded an emphatic nine-wicket victory over Udayan Biddalaya in the Dhaka zonal championship of the ninth Nirman schools cricket competition at the Dhanmondi Club ground yesterday.

Republics agree on unified team

LAUSANNE, Switzerland, Mar 9: The former Soviet republics agreed Monday to join a unified team for the Summer Olympics, IOC officials said, reports AP.

Francois Carrard, director general of the International Olympic Committee, said the IOC granted provisional recognition to the 12 former republics.

In exchange, they agreed in principle to the condition of fielding a joint team at the Barcelona Games, he said.

Carrard said Ukraine and Georgia, which had sought to compete independently, were part of the agreement.

Rain rules: Not quite cricket

CANBERRA, Mar 9: The controversial rule on target scores in incomplete matches is fast turning cricket's fifth World Cup into a computer show, reports AFP.

Calculators vie for attention as much as the bat and ball as the nine teams grapple with drastically altered run rates when rain interferes with the day's play.

The unconventional rule, in force only in Australia and New Zealand which bases winning targets on the highest scoring overs of the team batting first, has caused undisguised frustrations all around.

And with the Australian summer unusually wet this year, it could yet cause dramatic twists in the round-robin league which approaches a stirring climax in the next eight days.

India suffered a narrow one-run defeat by holders Australia after their innings was cut short by three overs due to rain; but only two runs were deducted from the victory target.

Pakistan restricted South Africa to a moderate 211 for seven in 50 overs in Brisbane on Sunday, but faced a daunting target of 194 from 36

overs when a heavy shower stopped play for an hour.

The South Africans heaved a sigh of relief when Pakistan fell just 20 runs short after a frantic run chase.

Consider the plight of England, who had the game all wrapped up when they bowled Pakistan out for a measly 74 in the 41st over, yet were given a 60-plus target to win in 15 overs in the rain-ruined encounter.

England were disappointed at having to share points, but at 24 for one after eight overs they might well have lost a game which was theirs for the asking.

The relevant rule in the Cup's playing condition reads: "If, due to suspension of play, the number of overs in the innings of the team batting second has to be revised, their target score shall be the runs scored by the team batting first from the equivalent number of highest scoring overs, plus one."

This is a major departure from rules in the four previous tournaments where targets were determined by the average runs scored through their innings by the team taking first strike.

"The side batting second struggles," conceded South

African captain Kepler Wessels, preparing for Tuesday's clash against minnows Zimbabwe at the Manuka Oval here.

"You need to have a balance. In the past it was too much in favour of the team batting first. Now it's the other way round."

"They need to find something midway."

Pakistan manager Intikhab Alam said: "It's a bad rule, but we can't complain because all the teams agreed to the playing conditions before the tournament began."

Soon after the loss to Australia, Indian captain Mohammad Azharuddin had remarked that the match had "exposed the loophole in the law."

The Indians had experienced the wrong end of the stick even before the World Cup began when they played an Australian Country Eleven in a practice match in Melbourne last month.

After restricting the country team to 165 for seven in 42 overs, the Indians were coasting towards an easy victory at 129 for three in the 31st over when rain abandoned play for the day.

Yet, the match was awarded to the home side because their score in the 30 highest overs

added up to 154.

"It's a crazy rule," understated England manager Mickey Stewart after the washed out game against Pakistan.

Despite the widespread unhappiness at the rule, no one has the answer to how a balance could be found where both teams have an equal advantage.

"A lot of thinking needs to be done about it," Intikhab said.

"For now, let's pray the rain keeps away for the remainder of the World Cup."

Intikhab's sentiments will be echoed by all the other teams as well, aware as they are of the havoc the dreaded rule can cause.

Imran terms rules ridiculous

PERTH, Mar 9: Pakistan captain Imran Khan suggested a reserve day be set aside in future World Cup tournaments following his team's controversial 20-run loss to South Africa in Sunday's rain-interrupted match in Brisbane, reports AP.

Imran believes an extra day in the playing schedule would help avoid the controversial situation in rain-shortened matches where the team batting second must chase a figure determined by the opposition's highest-scoring overs.

South Africa compiled 211 in its 50 overs but Pakistan was forced to make 193 — just 18 fewer — from a designated 36 overs after showers



IMRAN KHAN

stopped play for an hour.

"It really is a ridiculous rule because the team batting second has no chance," Imran said Monday.

"You might as well decide rain-interrupted matches by the loss of a coin."

"For the next World Cup the administrators have to change the system."

"There is enough time between matches to play on a reserve day or, in our case, there was sufficient light an hour after the match for us to play on after he scheduled finishing time."

The Pakistanis had just three points from four matches before the South African match and viewed that contest as a vital part of their World Cup campaign.

"I thought we had a good chance to win the match and we were crushing in the early stages," Imran said.

"But then came the rain, which wasn't forecast or I would never have put them in because of the rules, and we suddenly needed over eight runs per over."

The loss puts Pakistan in eighth place on the nine-nation World Cup to able with three matches to play in the round-robin series.

Imran, a veteran of 169 one-day international matches, said Pakistan had not written off its chances of making the semifinals.

Pakistan faces defending champion Australia in a day-night match in Perth on Wednesday.

Gray runs year's best 800m

SINDELPHINGEM, Germany, Mar 9: Johnny Gray ran the fastest 800 meters of the year, winning the event in one minute, 45 seconds at an international track and field indoor meet Sunday, reports AP.

The 31-year-old American led from the start and was never threatened.

Heike Henkel of Germany posted her 25th victory in a row in the women's high jump. She cleared 2.04 meters (6 feet-8 1/4 inches) to edge Stefka Kostadinova of Bulgaria, the world outdoor record holder who leaped 2.03 (6-8).

Merlene Ottey dropped out because of an injury, but the women's 60 meters still went to a Jamaican — Juliet Cuthbert in 7.09 seconds.

Linford Christie of Britain took the men's 60 meters in 6.55, edging Andreas Berger of Austria, who was second in 6.59.

Fenech charged

Llewellyn Starks of the United States won the men's long jump with a leap of 8.16 meters (26-9 1/4). World indoor champion Dietmar Haaf of Germany was second with a jump of 8.11 (26-7 1/4).

European indoor champion Nikolai Antonov of Bulgaria, fresh of a victory over Carl Lewis, took the men's 200 meters in 20.67 seconds.

Said Aouita of Morocco clinched the men's 3,000 in 7:41.53, and American Mike Mosharrarf's feat Sports Reporter

Mosharrarf Hosain Khan, the former swimming ace of the country, has once again made it into the news.

Competing in the Cilla di Firenze sixth international masters swimming meet in Florence, Italy on March 7 and 8, Mosharrarf won one and finished second in two other events.

Swimming in his age group, Mosharrarf won gold in the 50m backstroke event and silvers in the 200m backstroke and the 100m individual medley.

This was learnt from a fax sent by Old Stars Fiorentina Nuto to the General Secretary of the Bangladesh Swimming Federation Sunday.

Boutaib beats off challenge

FUKUOKA, Japan, Mar 9: Morocco's Brahim Boutaib nosed out Kenyan Thomas Osano with a blazing spurt in the final 100 meters to win the Fukuoka international cross-country meet men's 12-kilometer race here Sunday, reports AFP.

Boutaib, who won the 10,000-metre gold at the 1988 Seoul Olympics, and Osano both clocked 35min 15sec, followed by another Kenyan, Yobes Ondieki, four seconds behind.

In the women's six-kilometre race, Kenya's Delilah Asilago triumphed