

# Greatbatch hits a purple patch

WELLINGTON, Mar 16: If one player has set New Zealand's stunning World Cup Cricket campaign alight, it is Mark Greatbatch, reports Reuter.

Success has been sweet for the burly, blond left-hander, nicknamed Paddy, who nearly missed the limited overs tournament because of poor form.

"I've dreamed about this World Cup a lot," he said, savouring the memory of his match-winning performances for New Zealand, who are top of the nine-team standings and in the semifinals.

In three of the first four matches in which he played, Greatbatch tore the opposition attack apart in his unaccustomed role as opener. His aggregate from five Cup appearances after Sunday's game against England is 254 runs.

Ironically, he was only included in the team to play South Africa because of an injury to experienced opener John Wright.

Greatbatch had endured woe earlier in the season, being dropped after the first Test against England as well as finding runs scarce for his central Districts team.

However, he was chosen for New Zealand's 14-man World Cup squad, and his fortunes dramatically improved when they came to their third match, against South Africa.

A gamble by captain Martin Crowe to use his old friend and former school mate as opener against the South Africans paid off, both for the team and Greatbatch.

Crowe understood the opportunities provided by rules which restrict the fielding side to two players outside a 30-meter circle for the first 15 overs.

Greatbatch has been under instructions to loft the ball over the inner ring of fielders, and loft the ball he has, with complete abandon.

South Africa's pacemen were the first to come against Greatbatch's shock tactics. He smashed all of them into the

slaughter when they got Greatbatch early but he showed scant respect for the vaunted West Indian fast bowlers, putting them to the sword.

The sight of Greatbatch dancing down the pitch to Curtly Ambrose, one of the

cover of the experienced Malcolm Marshall was the shot of a class batsman.

Ambrose showed no taste for being treated in such fashion, he and Greatbatch having angry words.

But the opener's tactics and the heated exchanges upset the West Indies' bowlers more than the batsman. They not only lost their cool, but their line and length.

India's quick men, Kapil Dev and Manoj Prabhakar, were almost as angry as the West Indians when Greatbatch despatched them to and over the boundary. Prabhakar, in particular, had verbal exchanges.

"He was upset where the ball was disappearing to, I think," Greatbatch quipped after the match.

Asked how he had managed to turn his form around so dramatically, Greatbatch, a genial and unassuming man, said:

"I'm playing to my strength, which is playing straight."

As well as his batting, he is an inspirational fielder who moves with a speed belying his bulky frame and lifts his whole team.

Greatbatch, 28, had really been out of touch since scoring back-to-back centuries in the one-day series in England in 1990.

Despite early promise, Greatbatch had a relatively late start to international cricket, but success came immediately. The supremely confident left-hander scored a century on his Test debut against England in 1988 and quickly rose to the top five in computer rankings of batsmen.

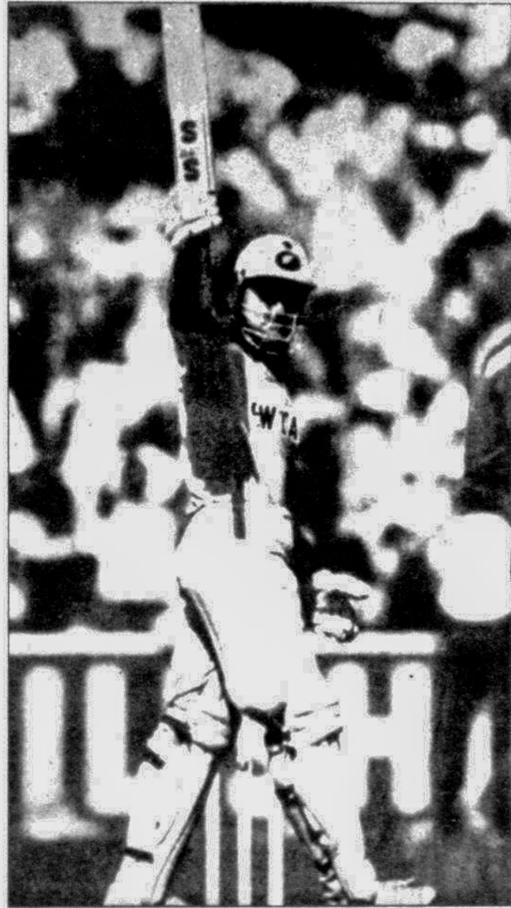
In a classic 14-hour innings of 146 not out against Australia, he almost single handedly saved New Zealand from apparently certain defeat in Perth in 1989.

But since then, until this tournament, his form was patchy and his confidence sagged accordingly.

Indian manager Abbas Ali Baig said he believed Greatbatch had been lucky and it could not last.

"I wonder how much longer he can get away with it?" he asked.

"It's working for me. They can look at the scoreboard," Greatbatch responded.



Greatbatch acknowledges the applause on reaching 50 against South Africa in Auckland on Feb 29.

Both Shantnagar 'B' and Evergreen topped of the super league Group A with six points from four matches.

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stands for six and put part-time bowler Adrian Kuiper onto the roof of the tall north Stand at Eden Park, a huge hit by any standards.

Zimbabwe were let off the

## Div-II cricket

Evergreen Club plays Shantnagar 'B' today at the Dhaka Stadium to decide the second promotee to the Mfnars First Division cricket league from next year.

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## Mushtaq praised

PERTH, Mar 16: Pakistan team manager Intikhab Alam named unheralded leg-spin bowler Mushtaq Ahmed as the man who has kept his team's World Cup cricket hopes alive, reports AP.

Pakistan boasts a powerful pace attack, but Mushtaq's performances in the team's last two games have proved decisive.

The 21-year-old claimed three wickets in Pakistan's 48-run triumph over Australia at the WACA Ground on Wednesday and then returned to the Perth area on Sunday to provide important breakthroughs in his team's four-wicket success against Sri Lanka.

Those two successes kept Pakistan in the race for a semifinal spot.

"He has got some wickets at crunch times for us in this tournament," Intikhab said.

"He may have been giving up 40 runs, but he has been the one to get the wickets the pace bowlers haven't been able to get."

"Mushtaq is a very confident young man and that is why we like to have him in the team."

Mushtaq bowls with a quick, wheeling action and deception pace and flight. He carries on the tradition of predecessors Abdul Qadir and Wasim Raja.

One of his victims against Australia was star batsman Dean Johns, who had joined Geoff Marsh in what appeared to be a match-saving partnership.

But Jones' dismissal, trying to loft Mushtaq over the infield only to pop a catch to deep mid-off, heralded the downfall of the Australian team.

On Sunday, Mushtaq removed Chandika Hathurusinghe (five) and Afhula Samrasckera (38) to restrict Sri Lanka to 99 for three after 26 overs of their opening innings.

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## Pak fans jubilate over victory

LAHORE, Mar 16: Pakistan's World Cup victory against Sri Lanka on Sunday has cheered cricket followers across the country and inspired confidence among cricket officials that the team had now clicked, reports AFP.

Although the match was not broadcast live on state television, the radio commentary from Perth in Australia was eagerly followed across the country, and Pakistan's win has rekindled hopes of a semifinal place.

The team has now struck the form and there is no reason why it should not do better in the remaining matches," said Zahid Ali Akbar, president of the Board of Control for Cricket in Pakistan, adding he was confident the team would qualify for the final.

In the Wills Trophy tournament held in Sharjah last October, Pakistan had bounced back from the edge of a precipice and gone on to win the championship, he said.

"The dismal performance in the earlier matches should not have made us pessimistic," he said. Denying reports that the team was plagued by disension.

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# Three vie for single slot

MELBOURNE, Mar 16: Even captain Allan Border admits Australia will be more than fortunate if they pull off a houndstyle escape act and qualify for the World Cup cricket semifinals on Wednesday, reports Reuter.

"We don't really deserve it but if we happen to sneak in, I don't think many teams will fancy playing us," border said when mulling over the mathematical equations that would see them through. West Indies will fancy their chances of ending any such possibility when the two meet in the decisive match under floodlights at the Melbourne Cricket Ground.

And the odds must be in favour of West Indies slamming the final nail in Australia's coffin.

Richie Richardson's West Indians can even afford to lose and still finish ahead of Australia on net run-rate in the final table of the round-robin stage of the tournament.

To move ahead of them, Australia have to win by a large margin, of around 35 runs if they bat first, or hit the winning runs no later than the 43rd over, the exact figures

depending on the totals involved.

Even should Australia win, however, Pakistan can make such mathematics unnecessary. If they do what none of the other seven teams have so far managed and beat New Zealand, in Christchurch on the same day, they will claim the last semifinal place.

The third scenario is simpler. A West Indies victory would not only clinch their semifinal berth but vault them into third place in the table on run-rate, ahead of South Africa and behind New Zealand and England.

Richardson has said he is looking forward to a "cut throat" match on Wednesday.

"They'll be playing against West Indies and everyone wants to cut our throats. Regardless of the situation, we always like to beat Australia," he said.

It has so far been a miserable tournament for Australia, winners of the trophy in Calcutta four years ago and strong favourites at the outset to retain it.

But defeats in their opening two encounters showed age and loss of form have hit the champions after a surfeit of one-day cricket.

Panic struck. Each match produced changes in the team

and switches in the batting order, some which crazy saw Border playing as low down as number seven.

With Australia managing only three wins in seven matches, it has led to suggestions that even Border, who along with coach Bob Simpson rebuilt the team into a powerful unit four years ago, should quit.

Defeat on Wednesday, especially a big one, would make that more of a possibility.

A hero only yesterday, with his face emblazoned on T-Shirts among thousands of fans, Border is witnessing how quickly the fickle public can change.

The poor results have almost certainly ended the international career of opener and vice-captain Geoff Marsh.

His scoring has been so slow he even drew jeers and boos from his home crowd at Perth against Pakistan and was dropped for the next match.

Against Zimbabwe on Saturday, Australia finally appeared to have got their batting order right, David Boon being restored as opener and Border moving up to number four.

It is to be seen whether that will work as successfully in a much sterner Test against West Indies.

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## Azhar blames poor team spirit

NEW DELHI, Mar 16: Indian skipper Mohammad Azharuddin blamed poor team spirit for his side's World Cup debacle as a nation-wide inquest into the former champions' early elimination from the competition continued here today, reports AFP.

Crickets-crazy Indians have watched their team's disappointing run live on TV and offered prayers at temples for the team's return to form. One shocking defeat drove a newly-married fan to commit suicide.

"The problem, I thought, was that players were interested only in individual performances," he said.

"I may be wrong in this assessment, but that is my belief. And when there is no concerted effort, no application

towards a team cause, there cannot be very good results," he told the Pioneer which published a two-part newspaper interview on Sunday and Monday.

India, the 1983 champions, failed to reach the semifinals of the Cup which is being held in Australia and New Zealand and had only two wins to show from their eight matches.

A six wicket defeat Sunday at the hands of South Africa in Adelaide capped the disastrous show, which came on top of Test and one-day series losses to Cup co-hosts Australia.

Azharuddin, who rediscovered the batting form that makes him one of cricket's most elegant players, said he thought the lack of team spirit was more evident among his younger teammates.

He named no names, but

said the brilliant Sachin Tendulkar was a distinguished exception.

"I tried my best to instill confidence. Right through. But it didn't work, obviously. I think a lot of them are taking places for granted," Azharuddin said, denying suggestions he had not been as assertive enough as skipper.

"It has been frustrating to see everything go wrong. Frustrating and extremely disappointing," he said.

Editorials have been written bemoaning the World Cup disaster, and fans have staged public protests against the slow batting of vice-captain Ravi Shastri, who eventually had to be dropped.

Former skipper Bishen Singh Bedi, not known to mind his words, said India's performance was the "most disastrous episode in the history of the country's cricket."

## English coach lauds New Zealand

WELLINGTON, Mar 16: New Zealand's unbeaten World Cup cricket team has improved dramatically the past month, England coach Micky Stewart said Monday, reports AP.

England defeated New Zealand 2-0 in a Test series and 3-0 in a limited-overs series before the World Cup started.

The Kiwis reversed that form on Sunday when they defeated the previously unbeaten Englishmen by seven wickets at the Basin Reserve. Both teams already were certain of playing in the World Cup semifinals.

England squandered a good start to muster 200 for eight and New Zealand replied with 201 for three with 9.1 overs to spare.

Stewart said New Zealand had rebuilt morale after their losses to England in January and February.

"They have bounced back very well," Stewart said.

"They've played well at home all the way through. They know the conditions they are going to play on inside-out and they apply themselves excellently.

"They are winning now. They are confident, they are unbeaten with seven out of seven.

"When you are winning you play with confidence and things tend to go your way.

"They have improved a lot."

Stand-in England captain Alec Stewart was disappointed with his team's performance.

"We were a few runs short of what we'd liked to have got," he said.

"New Zealand played well and knocked it of quite easily. It is obvious that we played on a slower wicket against slower bowlers.

"Once they got off to a flyer, like they did, we had to bowl them out to win it."

New Zealand captain

Martin Crowe said his players had savored the victory.

"It was definitely sweet," he said.

"All the wins have been pretty special but that was sweet because England were the form team and probably the favourites to win the World Cup.

"They've given us a bit of a hiding before, so all those ingredients made it particularly satisfying for us."

New Zealand travelled to Christchurch early Monday and planned to take the day off before beginning preparations for their final preliminary match against Pakistan on Wednesday.

## Women's hockey results

READING, England, Mar 16: Britain, beaten 3-0 by Australia on Saturday, turned the tables on Sunday with a 2-1 victory (halftime 2-0) over the Australians in the second of two women's hockey tests.

**CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer**

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9-13 CRYPTOQUIP  
Y D A N I D H J N U Z U Q I Z O H Z M -  
M Z A J Z O S D N C J I D A C H Q N M W  
V Z D V M Q G S D U W  
Yesterday's Cryptoquip: BUTCHER WAS FATIGUED BECAUSE HE WORKED HIS FINGERS TO THE BONE.  
Today's Cryptoquip clue: I equals F  
The Cryptoquip 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.

## Referendum threatens S Africa's semis

ADELAIDE, Mar 16: South Africa may pull out of the World Cup cricket semifinals if Tuesday's white-only referendum in their home country votes against continuing the dismantling of apartheid, reports Reuter.

Geoff Dakin, president of the mixed-race United Cricket Board of South Africa (UCBSA), said on Monday he would withdraw the team rather than disrupt the fifth World Cup — the first South Africa have been allowed to enter.

"If there is a 'No' vote and any team we are due to play against finds difficulty in playing against us because of that," said Dakin, "I would not disrupt the tournament and would withdraw South Africa from the competition."

"I don't want South Africa ever again to be a pariah in world cricket, I have had years of that," Dakin told Reuters.

South Africa were a late entry to the World Cup after being

readmitted to the International Cricket Council (ICC) — the sport's ruling body — last July.

Dakin added: "After being invited so late, I would not want to cause any hurt and disruption of the tournament."

The South African team secured a semifinal place when they beat India by six wickets in their last round-robin match here on Sunday.

Dakin, who has only recently joined South Africa's successful World Cup campaign in Australia, said he had not discussed the possibility of a withdrawal with the team and would not concern them unless a 'No' vote made it necessary to do so.

He added he had spoken to the World Cup committee and been told that even in the event of a 'No' vote they "don't see or anticipate asking us to withdraw."

He denied his comments were referendum-eve politics but said he would not mind if they had a positive effect in

south Africa.

Dakin said he would act only after discussing the matter with other UCBSA members, three of whom, vice-president Krish Mackerdhu, chairman of selectors Peter Van Der Merwe, and team manager Alan Jordaan, are in Australia.

Jordaan said he had not spoken to Dakin about the possibility yet and added: "We never went to all that trouble to become united to let it be undone by people voting 'No'."

"I believe it will be a 'Yes' vote," he said, but if not "we would have to get together and take the necessary steps."

Captain Kepler Wessels went further: The enthusiasm that cricket is receiving at the moment back in South Africa must have an influence on the vote — undoubtedly.

Reformist President F W de Klerk has begged 3.3 million white voters for a landslide that would send a positive message to 27 million voteless blacks.

He says he expects "a wonderful win" in the vote.

But officials of his National Party privately predict only a narrow margin, of 55 per cent or even less, on Tuesday for continued negotiations with blacks on a power-sharing constitution.

In Australia, Wessels said he had tried to shield the team from events in South Africa.

"Every now and then, you see something on television and that does tend to worry the guys. But the task at hand is really important and we have concentrated on that," he said.

"It is not that difficult to concentrate on cricket, it is our job. There is very little we can do about the political thing, we just have to hope that things work out."

Thirteen of the team's 14-men squad cast postal votes in the whites-only referendum.

The 14th player, Omar Henry, was not allowed to vote — he is a coloured (mixed race).

South Africa will play New Zealand or England in the semifinals.

When the Cup resumes after rest days on Monday and Tuesday, the remaining berth and semifinal line-up will be decided by the final round-robin matches on Wednesday.

West Indies, currently fourth in the nine-team standings, will qualify if they beat holders Australia in a day-night clash in Melbourne.

## Wessels wants more improvement

ADELAIDE, Mar 16: South Africa need to improve their play if they are to qualify for the final of the World Cup cricket tournament, captain Kepler Wessels said Monday, reports AP.

The South Africans on Sunday continued their remarkable return to international cricket by qualifying for the semifinals of the nine-nation tournament with a six-wicket win over India in a rain-shortened match at Adelaide Oval.

The South Africans will face either New Zealand or England in Sydney they're obviously a difficult side, and New Zealand under their conditions is a difficult task.

"But we really don't mind. We've got nothing to lose."

The South Africans will remain in Adelaide for the next three days until they find out their opponent.

Semifinals will be played March 21 and 22 in Auckland and Sydney with the final in Melbourne on March 25.

Wessels said the team had been enjoying the reception it has received from Australian fans after 22 years of isolation.

"I must admit that since we've been in Australia, the Australian people have been magnificent," Wessels said.

"We've had a lot of support and we appreciate that as a team, and particularly for someone like me, who has Australian connections, it's been fantastic."

Wessels played 24 Tests for Australia in the early 1990s before returning to his homeland.

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## Pollock defends SA selectors

ADELAIDE, Mar 16: South Africa's advance to the semifinals of the World Cup cricket tournament had vindicated the selectors, former Test fast bowler Peter Pollock said Monday, reports AP.

South Africa controversially omitted veterans Clive Rice and Jimmy Cook from its squad for the tournament, prompting outrage among fans.

Pollock, who is a South African selector, said the decision to choose a more youthful squad had been proved correct.

There was controversy at the start, because people obviously wondered how we could leave Rice and Cook out," Pollock said.

"I think now they can see we have other young cricketers in the country and people like Andrew Hudson are good players."

Prolific opening batsman Cook and allrounder Rice toured India when South Africa returned to international cricket last November, but were left out of the 14-man World Cup squad.

Kepler Wessels was named as captain in place of Rice.

## Firework kills soccer fan

BARCELONA, Spain, Mar 16: A 14-year-old boy died after being struck by a firework at a Spanish First Division soccer match in Barcelona on Sunday, radio said, reports Reuter.

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At this point, both teams present a problem.

"If we have to play England



KEPLER WESSELS