

The World Cup that cricket lost

By Shakil Kasem

After the last white ball is bowled (sic) and the lights at the MCG are dimmed, the world order of cricket would have its latest king. Thousands all over the world however would be left to ponder. Was this the World Cup that never was?

With all the burlesque panache associated with WC 1992, it certainly was not cricket that was played over the past month. At least, not cricket that was expected to be captured for sporting posterity by the best teams of the world. In effect, cricket at the world cup this year was played by calculator wielding administrators and marketing men.

Let no one tell us otherwise, but cricket is in fact a game steeped in traditions, norms and conventions. It cannot be marketed as a Big Mac over the fast food counter. And, contrary to popular opinion, cricket is a game to be appreciated by the knowledgeable, not half clad boys in war paint doing the Mexican Wave and wanting to win/win.

Everything seemed to have conspired against the cricket at this World Cup. Cricket, perhaps it was meant to be, but with more than a tinge of pathos to it. Teams who had agreed to the playing conditions earlier, for more than the

most obvious of reasons, were lambasting every rule that eluded their flailing bats.

One irrevocably, are the days, when cricket was governed by laws, not rules framed for Channel Nine, Benson and Hedges or Bukharr.

What is increasingly being lost on the sponsors of cricket tournaments (World Cup being no exception) is the concept of the game itself. A cricket match is played for the sole purpose of going through a set of parameters involving time, space and matter thereby arriving at an outcome. The outcome of a match could be, a win, a loss, a draw or a tie, depending on the duration of the match.

The APPEAL of the game lies in the MANNER in which the result is achieved. What had for so long made this game pure in its essence, was that players always had to play within a framework of laws, to get at a result. The result could never be contrived nor doctored.

This WC with its bizarre set of playing conditions will go down in cricket history as being no less controversial than the Bobbyline Tour itself. The world would have a new champion after March 25; but for sure this was tournament that cricket lost.

The captains — a study in contrast



MELBOURNE, Mar 24: Wednesday's World Cup final presents an intriguing clash between two of the most experienced and respected captains in international cricket, reports Reuter.

Take away Imran Khan from Pakistan or Graham Gooch from England and each side returns to an unexceptional level.

When Imran briefly quit the game, Pakistan struggled, driven by strife and jealousies.

When Gooch broke a bone in his left hand, England lost a rare, golden chance of winning a Test series in the West Indies. And just a year ago, when a serious hand infection prevented him playing for a lengthy period, England were thrashed by Australia.

Each has the ability to lift his team, to bring out top quality performances from sometimes average players.

Both lead by example on the field with total dedication to winning. Any sign of slackness is met with withering contempt. Neither can contemplate giving second best.

But their style is totally different.

Gooch, 38, has a quiet, almost shy manner. His lumbering gait as he walks is more like a duck with a hernia problem.

In contrast, the handsome Imran is imperious and unforgiving in his attitude to his team.

He is just terrified of what Imran will say. He is scared to go up there," said one Pakistani journalist who knows the team well.

Imran, 39, has been one of the finest all-rounders the game has known and still plays an influential role.

Despite his age and a nagging shoulder injury, the Pakistani captain has sometimes batted at number three and gone on as first change bowler during the tournament in an attempt to shape the course of a match.

Gooch and Imran have both stamped total control on their teams.

Imran says he is still playing international cricket only because it helps him raise money for a cancer hospital in Pakistan in memory of his mother who died of the illness.

Gooch has given repeated hints that he is not far from retirement.

The void in the teams when each goes will be enormous.



IMRAN KHAN



GRAHAM GOOCH

lem. The epitome of a sporting figure he most definitely is not. But appearances are deceptive.

He is a fitness fanatic and demands the same from his players. On the field he has

During an earlier Cup match, one player who had dropped a catch remained squatting on the boundary instead of joining his teammates when the drinks trolley went on.

National cricket from Friday

Sports Reporter

The eighteenth national cricket championship will get under way on March 27 at nine different venues.

The knock-out tournament will feature a record 57 teams.

Speaking at a press conference at the National Sports Council yesterday, treasurer of the Bangladesh Cricket Control Board and tournament chairman Reza-e-Karim informed that Bangladesh Tobacco Company, the sponsors, will bear the entire expenditure of the championship estimated at Taka 8.5 lakh. The tournament will be titled "Gold Leaf cricket championship."

The nine zonal champions and the runners-up of the Dhaka zone will participate in the finals scheduled to begin on April 10 in Dhaka.

The champions and runners-up will earn Taka 25,000 and 15,000 respectively while each participating team will receive Taka 3,000.

The man-of-the-match award of the final is worth Taka 2,000.

Not for the feeble-hearted

ISLAMABAD, Mar 24: Doctors have advised cricket fans with weak hearts to steer clear of television and radio sets here Wednesday a World Cup final fever grips Pakistan, reports AFP.

Cricket can kill with the message from top heart specialists as millions of Pakistanis prepared to cheer their team on to triumph against England in the final in Melbourne, Australia.

"A tensed-up heart patient is in grave danger of having a severe heart attack," Shahbaz Ahmed Qureshi, cardiologist at the Federal Government Services Hospital warned.

An elderly cricket fan died here Saturday while watching Pakistan's semi-final against New Zealand. He suffered a fatal heart attack when Pakistan lost the important wicket of Saleem Malik, one of the side's brilliant batsmen.

Millions of Pakistanis will follow the match live on televi-

sion and radio in support of a team which nobody expected to do so well in the competition.

Businesses are expecting massive absenteeism on a day when the national sport will dominate everything.

Streets were deserted in cities during the semifinal and the capital is expected to resemble a ghost town for much of the final.

Ramadan, the Muslim month of fasting, will induce even more fans to watch the match. The pace of life slows here during Ramadan with ample time for watching television or listening to the radio.

Too much cricket excitement can be even bad for the most healthy people, the doctors say. Shahbaz said the game can take a massive, emotional toll.

"Watching every delivery and hoping for the result one wishes for six hours puts tremendous pressure on head and heart," he said.

Meanwhile, London's High Commissioner here refuses to back Graham Gooch's side.

"I don't bet," Sir Nicholas Barrington told AFP. "It will be very even."

Barrington said Pakistan had improved after a bad start to the competition while the English were struggling with their form and had injury worries.

However, Pakistan captain Imran Khan, speaking in a television interview from Melbourne, said his side were "fully fit and in high spirits."

"Both teams are desperate because they have not won the Cup before," he said.

"It is a batting track so the batting strength appears to be a deciding factor."

This also seems giving us an edge as our main batsmen are in tremendous form," Imran said. "I don't underestimate the England batting but the way the Pakistan team has touched peak gives us great confidence."

MCG: The Final Frontier

Tawfiq Aziz Khan

Part 1

On board HMS Britannia. Captain Gooch's Log. Cup-date 22 March, 1992 A.D. Somewhere between Sydney and Melbourne. Time 1230 hrs GMT. Weather: Fair or foul.

HMS Britannia right on course to Melbourne on its voyage from Perth, 22 February, 1992 A.D. The ship has weathered some stormy atmosphere, losing balance at times, and deviating from course a couple of times. All hands at deck were not physically fit, including myself, but our long experience has stood us in good stead during these atmospheric turmoil and interference.

The first encounter with PNS Pakistan at Adelaide demanded slight change in course due to rough weather, thereby avoiding a direct collision which might have proved detrimental to the mission.

But the most terrible experience was gathered while passing through Melbourne against South Africa when the ship almost went off course but for First Officer Alec Stewart who deputised for me as I lay in sick bay and the black powerhouse Chris Lewis and First Mate Hick who steadied the ship back on course.

HMS New Zealand captained by Martin Crowe with a second rate, but hundred percent physically and psychologically fit crew forced the Britannia to change course over Wellington, pushing us once again over Africa where the weakest of all the crafts, flying a Zimbabwean flag, rammed and battered a totally sick Britannia crew. The doctor on board had almost half the crew in sickbay and repaired some of them for temporary duty. But that did not help. The Britannia once again was forced to stray away from course, but not from the mission of reaching Melbourne on time. During its month-long voyage never before had we run into such a powerful galaxy, again over the South African sky. It almost ended our voyage but for providential intervention. We managed to remain on course, but not without a certain feeling of guilt.

Now we have reached our destination but the mission is yet to be accomplished. We can not avoid a direct confrontation with PNS Pakistan captained by a seasoned veteran of five galactic voyages. I must have my main engines Lewis and Pringle in full throttle and the ancillaries Botham and DePrettas revving smoothly. First Officer Stewart and the first, second and third mates Hick, Lamb and Smith must sweep the deck very clean and quick but it still is a bit dicey proposition, particularly against the quick-firing super-rockets Akram and Aaqub, supported by the secondary boosters called Imran and Mushtaq. The weather, too, is a big factor and I am not going to take any chances by coming in from behind.

The mission, after two failed attempts, must be accomplished, for there will be no second chance.

Part 2

On board PNS Pakistan. Captain Khan's Log. Cup-date 21st March, 1992 A.D. Time 1030 hrs GMT. Somewhere over the Tasman Sea, on way to Melbourne from Auckland. Weather: Fair or foul.

It has been a rough voyage right from the start over the West Indies. The small islands put together could be so strong a galaxy was almost inconceivable. First Officer Javed Miandad, a veteran of five such voyages who was at the helm, was flabbergasted. Then, by the immense grace of God our ship avoided a potentially disastrous confrontation with the HMS Britannia and appeared to have deviated from course. INS India gave a severe jolt and the ship was thrown off balance straight over the turbulent stratosphere of South Africa where our cause was not helped by the meteoric rains. For a millennium PNS Pakistan was heading straight on a path from where there seemed no return.

But my First Officer and the mates on board had taken control with iron hands and veered the ship back on course to the bewildered jubilation of all hands.

The rough weather over Australia was crossed without much ado and the ship successfully traversed the Milky Way over the New Zealand skyline twice and was confidently back on course after a full circle, towards Melbourne. But I am worried about my Chief Gunner Salim Malik who seems to be beyond the doctor's reach. It seems that he has lost his firing pin somewhere on the way. If my two main engines Akram and Aaqub can generate full power without spitting their fire off target, as they did over New Zealand in the first trip, chief navigator Rameez Raja doesn't lose track and the standby generator Inzamam can find his ignition key as quickly as he did last time, I hope to take the Britannia from the front.

I know this is going to be the last galactic voyage for me and I must accomplish my mission before I fade into history.

Selectors nearly dropped Crowe!

WELLINGTON, Mar 24: Martin Crowe, New Zealand's innovative and inspirational World Cup captain, revealed on Monday he was asked by the selectors to quit the leadership before the tournament began, reports Reuter.

Crowe, interviewed on Television New Zealand by his brother Jeff, himself a former New Zealand captain, said he even doubted whether he would be selected as player.

But the doubts were the spur for Crowe to turn on a dazzling performance both as batsman and captain. He won a sports car after being voted player of the tournament.

"When it happened and they said they were going to take the captaincy away...I said I'm not going to back down to these guys."

"I dreamt of it [captaining New Zealand during the World Cup] for 18 months and I would have been letting the team down if I said 'No, I'll

resign and pass the captaincy over to someone else."

Crowe's ability as captain was hot topic on talk-back radio shows and letters-to-the-editor.

"We were actually playing very well in that [third] Test match and I was called into a meeting with the selectors and I thought they were going to ask me what I thought the World Cup side was going to be, which was to be announced in 24 hours' time."

"That wasn't in fact what the meeting was about."

"Basically, it got very tricky because my captaincy was in question."

"I didn't know whether I was going to be playing. I had that feeling that I might not be named to go to the World Cup."

Crowe's wife Simone, also interviewed on the show, said "A couple of selectors had asked Martin to resign."

Crowe's form against England was modest by his high standards -- he was suffering from a knee injury and

at one point considered standing down from the World Cup because of his lack of fitness.

But Crowe, 29, turned the Cup into a personal triumph. He scored 456 runs at an average of 114, but it was his captaincy as much as batting which won him plaudits.

Surprise tactics such as opening the bowling with off-spinner Dipak Patel and using Mark Greatbatch in an uncustomed role as a big-hitting opening batsman were largely responsible for New Zealand beating more favoured sides.

From being a side of indifferent fielders he transformed them into one of the best in the tournament.

Many cricket commentators believe some of Crowe's tactics have changed the face of one-day cricket.

New Zealand had a record World Cup sequence of seven consecutive wins before losing to Pakistan, who then beat them again in a close-run and thrilling semifinal.

Pakistan's road to the final had not been smooth at all; they started the campaign with a defeat at the hands of the Windies, then two consecutive defeats against India and South Africa appeared to have made their task almost impossible and it was no mean achievement that they regrouped from that sudden-death position to win the next three matches in a row against Australia, Sri Lanka and New Zealand, the last mentioned tasting their only defeat in their ultimate match of the league round.

Pakistan's place in the semifinals was made certain by the Australian victory over the Windies. In the semifinal, against New Zealand Pakistan presented the cricketing world the most exciting match of the tournament and deservedly earned for themselves a place in the final. At a 140 for 4 in the 35th over it looked as if they would never reach the target of 263. But they did, and in no uncertain manner, due mainly to a gem of an in-

MARTIN CROWE editor columns during England's recent tour when New Zealand lost 2-0 in the three-Test series and 3-0 in the one-day series.

Crowe said the selectors raised doubts about his captaincy during the third Test in Wellington.



Injured English batsman Robin Smith faces a ball during yesterday's practice at the MCG on the eve of the World Cup final. Smith, who looks tense in the nets, may yet make the team today.

—AFP photo

Let cricket be the winner

By A M Chowdhury

The fifth World Cup has reached the final stage: England and Pakistan will be fighting it out at the MCG today before a hundred thousand spectators and millions of viewers all over the world. This is the third World Cup final for England and for Pakistan it is their maiden appearance. Is it going to be their time lucky for England? Or, like India, who, on their maiden appearance in the final of the third World Cup in 1983, clinched the title, are Pakistan going to surprise the world?

On paper, England appear to be a fairly strong team. Their batting line-up is fairly deep and with three or four (if Derek Pringle is back to fitness) genuine all-rounders their bowling prowess is by no means limited. Graham Gooch can call upon as many as seven bowlers.

Among the batsmen Neil Fairbrother (223 in 6 innings, av. 55.75), Graeme Hick (249 in 8 innings, av. 42.00) and Robin Smith (193 in 8 innings, av. 32.17) are in good nick. Ian Botham (192 in 9 innings, av. 24.00) has not really done anything spectacular so far. Graham Gooch started well with three fifties in the first four matches; but on his return from injury, due to which he missed two games, he has been struggling. So is the case with Allan Lamb, who did not play the initial six matches.

Ian Botham has proved himself to be more useful as a bowler; his 15 wickets in the tournament so far have cost him 17.6 runs apiece. Of all the England bowlers, Philip DePrettas appears to be the most deadly, though his 11 wickets were earned at 25.18 apiece. Chris Lewis (7 at 23.14 apiece) and Dermot Bevey (8 at 14.25 apiece), if their injuries do not trouble them, are important weapons in England's armoury. Derek Pringle, another player on the casualty list, has been their most economical bowler. England have a plus point in their fielding and running between the wickets. Watch out for that tall, lanky and super agile Chris Lewis, who is excellent with his quick pick-ups and throws.

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ings of 60 off 37 balls from young Inzamamul Haq. Pakistan have been found to hobble in the initial matches of tournaments, at Sharjah last October and also in the Nehru Cup tournament in 1989; but once they found their rhythm, their record has been something to be proud of. They won the cup on both those occasions. Can they do the same this time?

In the present World Cup, Rameez Raja (341 runs, av. 68.2 and one of only two batsmen to have scored two centuries), Javed Miandad (379 runs, av. 54.14) and Aamir Sohail (322, av. 35.78) have been the mainstays of the Pakistan batting. Salim Malik (116 runs, av. 19.33) has been a disappointment so far. Inzamamul Haq who came to live up to his potential in the semifinal, otherwise averages 20.33 in 9 innings. Among the Pakistani bowlers Wasim Akram (15 wickets, av. 19.26), Aaqub Javed (9 wickets, av. 33.44) and Mushtaq Ahmed (14 wickets, av. 19.35) have been amongst the wickets. Imran Khan, troubled by a shoulder injury which kept him out of the first two matches, has got only six wickets and with the bat he has been struggling to find his touch and timing.

The Pakistan side appears fairly balanced with a happy blend of experience and youth. Their trump card is going to be Mushtaq Ahmed, the leg-spinner, a rare breed in present day cricket. If he adjusts himself well to the bouncy fast wicket at the MCG and finds his rhythm, the English batsmen may find it a difficult proposition to keep the scoreboard ticking while preserving their wickets. Pakistan would also very much hope their star batsman Salim Malik to be in his 1989 Eden Gardens mood.

The MCG is the largest cricket ground with the longest boundary. Any lofted shot that would clear the fence in any other venue could be an easy catch here. So batsmen have to be really cautious with their lofted shots; but in a big arena singles play an important role.

One should remember the super-professional attitude of the England team. In order to beat them Pakistan shall have to come up with a determined approach. Under Imran Khan's inspiring leadership they are capable of delivering the goods and this has been proved in their last four matches. If Pakistan can sustain that spirit, England may not quite find their third appearance in a World Cup final that lucky.

One and all expect a tough, keen and exciting final. The safest prophecy could be 'let the better side win.'

Results in a one-day encounter are virtually dictated by the performance of the teams on the day; an out-of-the-ordinary performance by any individual may clinch the issue in favour of his team. Cricket lovers all over the world would love to see more than just one outstanding performance. We all hope to see a good match, full of thrills and excitement, and whoever wins, let cricket be the winner. We would very much hope for a match uninterrupted by rain, the spoiler, and the 'bad laws' associated with it.

Windies lead England A

ARNOS VALE, St Vincent, Mar 24: West Indies A took the lead against England A on Monday, the third day of a four-day Test, thanks to a wonderful innings of 77 by Roland Holder, reports AP.

Holder, 24, of Barbados, guided the home team to 302, a lead of 61 on first innings.

England were 46 for one in their second innings when rain brought play to an end an hour before the close.

Resuming with the score on 142 for four, Holder and Junior Murray extended their partnership to 77.

The not out batsman are Darren Bicknell (17) and Mark Ramprakash (2).

England A 241 and 46 for one (Hugh Morris 23).

West Indies A 302 (Roland Holder 77, Robert Samuels 56, Junior Murray 44, Linden Joseph 22, John Stephenson 4 for 22, Robert Croft 4 for 90).

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS

1 New Mexican Pueblo

5 Half of all parents

9 5 Across et al.

12 In due time

13 Hodge-podge

14 "Chances"

15 English statesman

16 Sleuth Wolfe

17 Running out

18 Luminary

19 Author Kesey

20 "Monopoly" money?

21 "A Chorus Line" finale

23 Turn red?

25 Crusoe's pal

28 Pretentious colloq.

32 Yoga position

33 One of the Greats

34 Small garage's

capacity

Court

agenda

Wallach or Whitney

"Poppycock!"

Apple co-founder

Irving of Hollywood

On the rocks

"Caught you!"

Oaf

"—be in Eng-land..."

"Bei—Bist du Schön"

Siouan boy

Barcelona

54 Bing's pal

55 German metropolis

Duke it up a bit

1 Uses a ray gun

2 — pricing on

3 Bene lead-in

4 Makes popular

5 Party animal?

6 Sheltered

7 Skirt style

8 "Barney Miller" actor

9 Hardy cabbage

10 Unyielding

11 Rep.

Gingrich

20 Cuts

22 Twangy actor

25 Ziegfeld

26 One Reagan

27 Resident: suffix

29 Annoy

30 Bambi's aunt Ena, e.g.

31 Aardvark's tidbit

35 Theater district

36 Restoration poet

39 Door-frame piece

40 Major U.S. river

41 Insult

43 Silver sliver?

45 One of "My Three Sons"

46 Sicilian spouter

47 "Let's Make a Deal" choice

49 Male swan

Solution time: 27 mins.

BRA WILY CRIB
EON ACME HONE
AND IRONS EDGE
EVEN GREEN
ACRES BLEU
LOSS CLAMBAKE
IKE GRASS NIP
TENEMENT IDLE
GAWK PLANE
YEARN MAIN
ONCE ANDRETTI
UNIT DOCK EEL
REDS OWLS BAL

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12					13				14	
15					16				17	
18					19				20	
			21	22			23	24		
25	26	27					28		29	30
32							33			
34					35		36			
			37				38			
39	40	41			42	43			44	45
48					49				50	
51					52				53	
54					55				56	

9-21 CRYPTOQUIP

Z A X E R H A F D X P F Y Y W B E Z W

H W A T D R U K A B F X , E Z W

K R D F H P Z , E Z W T R Y B W D H N Y W .

Yesterday's Cryptoquip: ARE KINDERGARTEN TEACHERS ESTABLISHING A BLOCK ASSOCIATION?

Today's Cryptoquip clue: D equals N

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.